

Waltke, Psalms, Session 1, Resources from Notebooklm

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 1, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Bruce Waltke's lecture introduces his course on the Book of Psalms, emphasizing its popularity and complexity within the Christian tradition. He outlines several critical approaches to studying the Psalms—**historical, form-critical, liturgical, rhetorical, eschatological-messianic, and redactional**—highlighting the importance of understanding *how* the text functions to grasp its meaning. Waltke stresses the need for a proper hermeneutic, informed by a sound doctrine of Scripture, to avoid misinterpretations common in modern scholarship. The lecture also underscores the Psalms' emotional depth and their significance in shaping Christian theology and practice. He concludes by previewing the course structure, which will blend broad thematic studies with close readings of individual Psalms.

2. 17-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms → Waltke).



Dr. Waltke's Introduction to the Psalms.mp3

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpt by Dr. Bruce Waltke on the Book of Psalms:

Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke's Lecture 1 on the Psalms

I. Introduction and Overall Purpose

- **Focus on the Text and God's Word:** Waltke begins by emphasizing the sacredness of the Psalms, seeing them as both the words of God's people and God's word to us. He underscores the need for divine guidance ("You must speak to us.") and the illumination of the Holy Spirit to understand Scripture.
- **Quote:** *"We're about to step into your holy word and into the words of your people who celebrated you and prayed to you for over a thousand years... Their words to you, their praise to you, their petitions have become your word to us."*
- **Submission to the Text:** Waltke stresses the importance of exegesis ("lead out of the text") as opposed to eisegesis ("reading into the text"). He emphasizes a holistic approach, understanding that the parts of the Psalms gain meaning within the context of the whole. The goal is to be "submissive to the word."
- **Psalms as a Tool for Exegesis:** He shares his personal journey of discovering the Psalms as a perfect vehicle for teaching exegesis due to their diverse lengths and their emotional depth.
- **Emphasis on both Exegesis and Exposition:** He differentiates between exegesis (drawing meaning out of the text) and exposition (setting it forth in a palatable manner). He sees the exegete as a farmer pulling weeds and the expositor as one who grinds it into bread.
- **Personal Journey:** He explains his personal journey to studying the Psalms, including teaching exegesis, being an expositor, working on the NIV translation, and now writing a commentary, noting his collaboration with historian Professor Houston.
- **The Psalms as a Popular Book:** Waltke states that the Psalms are "the most popular book within the Christian community," noting their frequent inclusion with the New Testament in publishing and their frequent quotation within the New Testament.

- **Psalms as an Expression of all Emotions:** Waltke highlights that the Psalms cover the full spectrum of human emotion. They articulate joy, despair, protest, the absence of God, and even the feeling of being forsaken, which he notes even Christ experienced.
- **Quote:** *"It gives expression to every emotion from wrenching anguish, to protest against God... They talk about the absence of God, in distress, where are you, God? And even Christ on the cross gives expression to it."*
- **Importance of Memorization:** He states the historical importance of memorizing the Psalms and the use of them as spiritual practice in the early church. It was part of the fabric of people's lives and shaped their character. Bishops had to memorize the entire book to examine priests.
- **Quote:** *"In the early church to be a bishop, you had to memorize the entire book of Psalms so that you could examine the priest to make sure he knew the book of Psalms."*
- **Spiritual Nourishment:** The Psalms are described as "spiritual food that has nourished the church for 2000 years." He believes that a more biblically focused approach (through study of the Psalms) is essential and will lead to a more holy and disciplined church, in contrast to a more therapeutic/psychological approach that simply aims to make people happy.

II. Complexity and Challenges in Studying the Psalms

- **Long Period of Composition:** Waltke notes the complexity of the Psalms due to their composition over a thousand years, ranging from Moses to the post-exilic period. This lengthy period accounts for the diverse perspectives and historical contexts present in the book.
- **Difficult Material:** He highlights the presence of difficult or disturbing passages, including passages like the one about dashing Babylonian babies against rocks, and the seemingly contradictory lament of God's forsakenness and the theological implications this raises.
- **Academic Challenges:** He acknowledges that modern academia is often biased against traditional views of authorship (specifically David) and highlights the need to address these questions within the seminarian context, so that the church can better defend traditional views.

- **Authenticity and Perspective:** Waltke discusses his struggle of being able to talk *about* God in the third person. He states that the Psalms should be viewed from a second-person perspective, and he gives an example of a classroom exercise he had where he had students attempt to understand a person through observing him and talking about him and how that created an inability for them to connect to that person.
- **Quote:** *"I can't come to know you by talking about you. I have to listen to you. I have to come with spirit to you. I have to come with some sympathy."*
- **Hermeneutics of Suspicion:** He criticizes approaching the text with a "hermeneutics of suspicion," in which one starts with skepticism of the authors and their motives. He emphasizes that such a lens can lead to a misunderstanding of the text.

III. Course Objectives and Approach

- **Purpose of Scripture:** He references 2 Timothy 3:16, that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine (knowledge of God), for knowing yourself as a servant of God, and for rebuking, correcting, and instructing in righteousness. He emphasizes that the Psalms provide a unique opportunity to understand what God is like because it is how the people of God describe him.
- **Understanding the Psalms:** Waltke states that the goal of the course is not to teach theology directly but rather to give the students tools and lenses to read the Psalms authentically, so that they can then build their own solid theology from a better understanding of the text.
- **Quote:** *"You don't know what a text means until you know how it means."*
- **Emphasis on Method:** He asserts that the right method must precede the right results and outlines several approaches to the Psalms that will be covered in the course.
- **Structural Analysis:** He stresses the importance of understanding the structural patterns of the Psalms including alternating parallelism, chiasm, and concentric parallelism, using examples from 1 Kings and Elijah on Mount Horeb to demonstrate these patterns.
- **Quote:** *"You don't know how a text means, what a text means, until you know what it means."*

IV. Approaches to Studying the Psalms (Course Structure)

- **Historical Approach:** Examining the historical context of the Psalms, including questions of authorship (e.g., whether "of David" means "by David") and how these historical grounding influence our understanding of them.
- **Form-Critical Approach:** Classifying Psalms based on their literary types (e.g., hymns, prayers/petitions). He notes that hymns give us the doctrine of God and petitionary Psalms are highly humble and doxological. He notes that they should be communal and that people should not take matters into their own hands.
- **Liturgical Approach:** Considering the function of the Psalms in temple worship and processions, and the symbolism of the temple in relation to God.
- **Rhetorical Approach:** Analyzing the structural patterns and literary devices within the Psalms. This approach is central to how Waltke reads the text.
- **Eschatological/Messianic Approach:** Exploring how the Psalms speak of Jesus and their prophetic significance. This will address the complexity of the dual historical and prophetic nature of the texts.
- **Redaction Criticism:** Investigating how the entire book of Psalms was edited and organized, including its division into five books and how individual psalms connect with the larger narrative.

V. Key Takeaways

- The Psalms are sacred texts that offer profound insights into both God and the human condition.
- A holistic and submissive approach to the text, guided by the Holy Spirit, is crucial for understanding the Psalms.
- The Psalms are complex and require careful study, including consideration of their historical context, literary structure, and theological themes.
- Understanding the "how" of a text is essential before understanding "what" it means.
- The course aims to equip students with tools to read and understand the Psalms authentically, enabling them to build a robust and biblical theology.

This briefing doc captures the main ideas and goals of Dr. Waltke's initial lecture, providing a strong foundation for the subsequent study of the Psalms.

4. Study Guide for Waltke, Psalms, Session 1, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is exegesis, according to Dr. Waltke?
2. Why does Dr. Waltke consider the book of Psalms ideal for teaching exegesis?
3. What is the difference between exegesis and exposition, as Dr. Waltke describes them?
4. Why does Dr. Waltke say that the book of Psalms is so popular among the Christian community?
5. According to Dr. Waltke, what is one of the primary ways the New Testament authors used the Psalms?
6. Why does Dr. Waltke consider the Psalms the most complex book of the Old Testament?
7. What is one of Dr. Waltke's difficulties with talking about God in an academic setting?
8. What is the main point Dr. Waltke is making with his anecdote about the students in the corner?
9. What are the three structural patterns Dr. Waltke outlines in his discussion of the rhetorical approach?
10. What is the main goal of the course, according to Dr. Waltke?

Answer Key

1. Exegesis, as Dr. Waltke defines it, is the process of "leading out" of the text what the inspired author intended it to mean; it's about understanding the author's intent within the text and not reading into it what we want it to mean. It involves a submission to the text, allowing its meaning to emerge.
2. Dr. Waltke views the book of Psalms as ideal for teaching exegesis because the individual psalms are generally short, averaging about 10 verses, which allows for a focused, holistic reading of the entire work that is still easily manageable. Additionally, the Psalms cover the full range of human emotions and experiences.

3. Exegesis, according to Dr. Waltke, is like a farmer pulling weeds out of a field, discovering the meaning of the text, while exposition is like a baker taking that harvested grain, grinding it, and making it into palatable bread so that others can understand and enjoy it. It's about setting the text forth for others to grasp.
4. Dr. Waltke suggests the book of Psalms is popular in the Christian community because it gives voice to the whole spectrum of human emotions, from anguish to joy, including wrestling with God's absence or injustices, and because it is so often quoted in the New Testament.
5. New Testament authors often quote or allude to the Psalms creatively and sometimes very exegetically to apply them to new situations. They were not formally educated but used the Psalms almost instinctively, demonstrating a deep familiarity with and understanding of Scripture.
6. Dr. Waltke considers the Psalms the most complex book of the Old Testament due to its wide range of emotions, the long period over which it was written (almost 1000 years), and the difficult passages, such as those expressing deep anguish or calling for vengeance which can be challenging for Christian readers to interpret.
7. Dr. Waltke feels inauthentic when talking about God because the third-person perspective feels distancing, and he prefers the second person as in a personal relationship. He struggles with the academic need to objectify God when he wants to address God directly.
8. The anecdote about the student in the corner illustrates that an objective, scientific approach to the Psalms can destroy its purpose and lead to a failure to hear from God. You cannot know another person by talking about them from a distance. One must come with sympathy and listen to them, not just analyze them.
9. The three structural patterns outlined in the rhetorical approach are: alternating parallelism, which goes A,B,C,D and then escalates it to A',B',C',D'; chiastic parallelism, which goes A,B,C,D,X,D',C',B',A'; and concentric parallelism, which goes A,B,C,C',B',A'.
10. The main goal of Dr. Waltke's course is not to teach theology directly but rather to provide students with the necessary lenses and understanding of the different approaches to the Psalms, enabling them to do authentic theology themselves. He wants them to know how the text means to determine what it means.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer the following questions in essay format, using information from the source material.

1. Discuss the importance of hermeneutics in studying the Psalms, according to Dr. Waltke. How do different presuppositions about Scripture affect interpretation?
2. Compare and contrast the historical and form-critical approaches to studying the Psalms, as described by Dr. Waltke. What are the benefits and potential limitations of each?
3. Explain the rhetorical approach to understanding the Psalms, using the concepts of alternating, chiastic, and concentric parallelism. How does understanding these structures enhance comprehension of the text?
4. Discuss Dr. Waltke's concern regarding modern approaches to the book of Psalms that lead to misinterpretation. What errors are made, and what are their consequences?
5. How does Dr. Waltke connect the Psalms to the person of Jesus? In what ways do the Psalms help believers understand Jesus and His experiences?

Glossary

Exegesis: The process of critically interpreting a text, especially a religious text, by "leading out" its intended meaning from the author within the text, not reading into it one's own interpretations.

Exposition: The act of explaining a text in a way that makes it clear, understandable, and applicable to an audience. The "baking" part of understanding a text.

Hermeneutics: The theory and methodology of interpretation, especially the interpretation of biblical texts, involving presuppositions and approaches to understand the meaning of the text.

Rhetorical Approach: Analyzing the structure and literary devices of a text to understand how it conveys its message, such as recognizing patterns like parallelism (alternating, chiastic, and concentric).

Alternating Parallelism: A literary structure where ideas or themes are presented in a sequence, and then repeated with intensification or variation (A, B, C, D; A', B', C', D').

Chiastic Parallelism: A literary structure where ideas or themes are presented in an order, then mirrored in reverse (A, B, C, D, X, D', C', B', A').

Concentric Parallelism: A literary structure where ideas or themes are arranged in a sequence leading to a central point, then reflected back (A, B, C, C', B', A').

Form Criticism: The study of literary forms and genres in the Bible, seeking to understand the purpose and function of different types of texts (e.g., hymns, petitions, lament).

Liturgical Approach: Examining how texts were used in worship settings, especially in the temple, to understand their meaning and function.

Eschatological/Messianic Approach: Interpreting texts in light of their potential connections to the end times and/or the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Redaction Criticism: The study of how texts were edited and compiled into their final form to identify patterns of meaning and purpose.

Theophany: A visible manifestation of God or a deity.

Doxological: An expression of praise or glory to God.

5. FAQs on Waltke, Psalms, Session 1, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

1. **Why is the book of Psalms so popular, particularly within the Christian community?** The book of Psalms holds a special place in the Christian community because it provides expression for the full range of human emotions, from intense anguish and doubt to exuberant joy and praise. It does not shy away from the difficult questions of suffering, injustice, and even the apparent absence of God. The Psalms also deeply resonate with the Christian faith as they are frequently quoted in the New Testament, and are seen to be foundational in Jesus's own understanding and expression of faith. This wide range of relatable emotions and the Psalms' rich theological content makes them a vital book for Christian worship, devotion, and spiritual formation.
2. **What is the difference between *exegesis* and *exposition* when studying the Psalms?** *Exegesis*, derived from Greek words meaning "to lead out," refers to the process of carefully analyzing a text to discover the original author's intended meaning. It involves examining the text's historical, cultural, and literary contexts. In contrast, *exposition* involves clearly presenting the meaning of the text in an accessible and engaging manner so that it is understandable to the audience. Exegesis is like the farmer extracting the meaning from the field, while exposition is like the baker preparing the bread so it is appealing and easy to consume.
3. **What different approaches can be used to interpret the Psalms?** Several approaches can be used to understand the Psalms. These include:
 - **Historical Approach:** Examining the historical context and authorship of the Psalms, including the question of Davidic authorship.
 - **Form-Critical Approach:** Classifying Psalms by their literary types, such as hymns of praise, lament psalms (petitions), and wisdom psalms.
 - **Liturgical Approach:** Understanding how the Psalms were used in temple worship and understanding the symbolism and practices associated with these events.
 - **Rhetorical Approach:** Analyzing the literary structures of the Psalms, including alternating parallelism, chiasms, and concentric structures.
 - **Eschatological/Messianic Approach:** Examining how the Psalms point to and relate to Jesus Christ.

- **Redaction Critical Approach:** Understanding how the book of Psalms was organized and edited over time into its current structure, including the five-book division.
1. **What is the importance of structure when studying the Psalms?** Understanding the literary structures within the Psalms is crucial. These structures, such as alternating parallelism, chiasm (crossing structures), and concentric structures, are not simply stylistic devices. Instead, they guide us into the message of the text, highlighting the relationship between different ideas and revealing the writer's intent. They often present a deeper, more complete meaning of the text than would otherwise be apparent. These structures show how a writer is building an argument or a feeling, and how one theme connects with another.
 2. **How do the Psalms reveal the doctrine of God?** The book of Psalms reveals the doctrine of God through the expressions of praise and through the experience of the writers of the Psalms. Hymns within the book, for example, particularly highlight God's attributes, his acts of creation, his historical actions, and his faithfulness to his people. By expressing the people's understanding of God in a direct and emotional way, these writings offer a unique perspective on his nature compared to other forms of biblical writing, such as prophetic and legal texts.
 3. **How do the Psalms address the struggles of the righteous and the presence of evil?** The Psalms do not shy away from the struggles of the righteous. They honestly express feelings of abandonment, injustice, and anguish, particularly in the face of evil. However, these complaints and struggles are always intertwined with praise. It is through this combination that the righteous show their dependence on God and their hope in his justice. In the Psalms the righteous person is one who is characterized by a dependence on God and will not take matters into their own hands.
 4. **Why is it important to have a correct hermeneutic (approach to interpretation) when studying Scripture?** The way one approaches Scripture is critical for its correct understanding. Coming to the text with wrong presuppositions or a biased heart can lead to a misinterpretation that can lead to a diminished and inaccurate view of God. A hermeneutic should begin with reverence and a willingness to hear from God. Also the interpreter should strive to understand how the text means and what it is communicating before forming an opinion or a theology about the text.

5. **What is the aim of studying the Psalms beyond just gaining theological knowledge?** The aim of studying the Psalms is not just to gain theological knowledge, but to develop a more authentic and solid theology, in which the student is personally transformed and grows closer to God. By exploring various approaches to the Psalms, the hope is that the individual will develop the ability to interpret scripture on their own, using the tools provided, and become a "theologian" as it were. Ultimately, studying the Psalms should equip individuals to live as faithful followers of God, offering both doctrinal clarity, personal growth, and effective service in the church and the world.