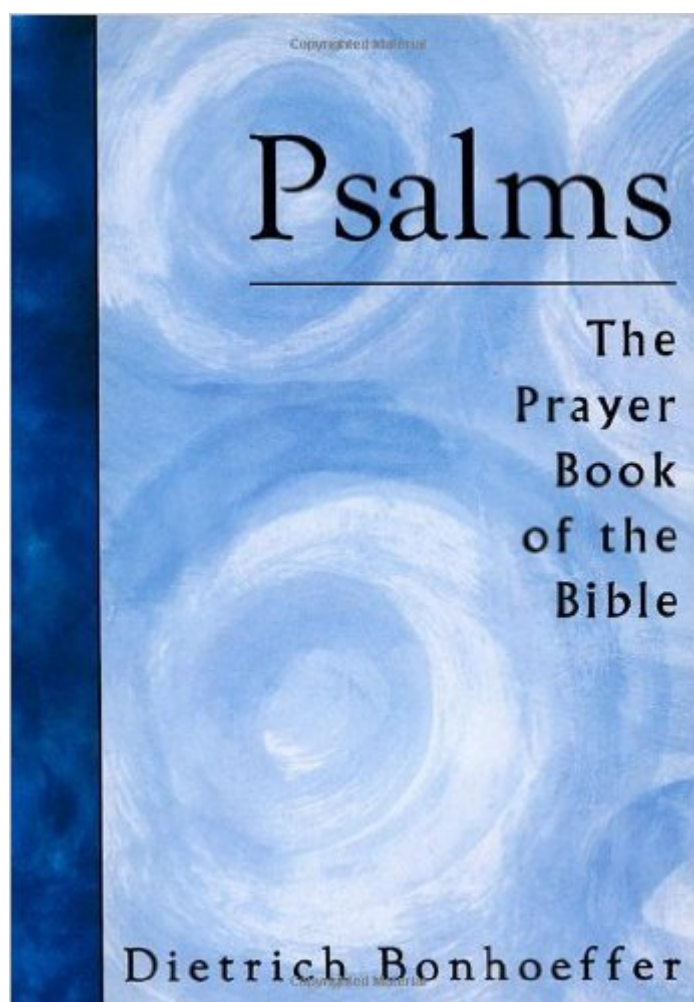


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# Psalms: The Prayer Book Of The Bible



## Synopsis

An illuminating study of prayer using the Psalms as a guidebook.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this beautiful little book, Bonhoeffer guides the Christian to the Scriptures for lessons in how to pray. He affirms that the Lord's Prayer is the primary prayer of the Christian, which he asserts contains every prayer that a Christian ought to pray. Bonhoeffer also makes a startling but wise claim that jolts us out of the narrowness of our focus in prayer: "The richness of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart." Thus we find the book of Psalms to be a rich treasury of prayers that are part of God's inspired word, and therefore a true place to learn how God would have us pray. The book proceeds to give some general background on the history and use of the Psalms as the prayer book of the Bible. In the main part of the book he presents one possible system of categorizing the Psalms according to their petitions, and also points out that they can be organized according to the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. But the most valuable part of the book, in my opinion, is how he shows us how the Psalms are to be prayed in Christ, of whom the Psalms also testify (Luke 24:44). As Bonhoeffer says, "It is the incarnate Son of God, who has borne every human weakness in his own flesh, who here pours out the heart of all humanity before God, and who stands in our place and prays for us." This is a fine book for the devotional/prayer life of the Christian.

The publication of this book led Nazi Germany to forbid Dietrich Bonhoeffer to publish anything else. As was evidenced in their efforts first to control, and later to suppress, the Christian church in Germany, they felt threatened by the fact that Christians put Christ ahead of the Fuhrer. Those who read this book will quickly discover that Christ is all in all to Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This is the attitude in which he teaches Christians pray the Psalms. I have always enjoyed singing the Psalms in worship, and I have experimented with praying the Psalms privately. I always hit a snag, however, when I came to assertions of personal righteousness or cries for God to exact specific, brutal vengeance on enemies. How can such words be part of Christian prayer? Dietrich Bonhoeffer leads the reader to discover exactly how rich and honest every word of each Psalm can be, prayed as the prayer of Christ himself. I fervently recommend this book to every Christian who wants to deepen his/her prayer life.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, hung by the Nazis for his principled resistance to perversion of Christian life, leads us through the themes and value of psalms. These song-prayers, brought forth from thousands of years of human longing for connection with God, are just as powerful in their meaning of human life, today. Use this tiny volume as a study guide to psalm themes for better prayer life.

This is one of those good books that actually treat the Psalms for what they are: prayers. Many introductions and commentaries neglect this, treating the Psalms as though they were history, instruction or whatever. While history, instruction and a lot else is in the Psalms, their primary purpose is that we may pray after God, speaking His words back to Him. The best introduction to the Psalms is probably to begin praying them, perhaps with the help of a good prayer book. But if someone's really green, this book will provide an understanding of the different types of Psalms, different human authors within the Psalmody, and an overview of some of the difficulties we perceive within the Psalms. My big complaint with the book is Bonhoeffer's occasional over-emphasis on his perceived need to pray (using the Psalms in this case) against an also-perceived wrath of God. This reflects an unfortunate -- in my opinion -- emphasis, one likely stemming from his Lutheran background. But it's a relatively minor issue with the book. This book is a quick (it could easily be finished in an hour), easy read. The book's also divided into sections which could be used as subjects for daily meditation or for a series of classes.

This small book of Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was the last publication he was allowed under the Nazi regime in the early 1940s. It serves as a powerful introduction to the most prayerful book in the

Bible. The reader might gain insight into the book by first reading the last chapter, a short biography of Pastor Bonhoeffer's life. The first five chapters of the book discuss how to pray, the Psalms and their structure, use with music, and use in congregational and personal prayer. There is a chapter on classification, which provides Bonhoeffer's classification of Psalms into ten categories: The Creation; The Law; Holy History; The Messiah; The Church; Life; Suffering; Guilt; The Enemies; The End. As in any classification system there is some overlap. Yet, this system leads gently into praying the Psalms for personal use. The final two chapters are entitled: "Petition for the Spirit of Life" and "The Blessing of Morning Prayer." This is truly a gift for those who wish to pursue praying the Psalms.

**Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible** Though a small book in size, a powerful presentation of prayer in various settings. Additionally, for those who perhaps stumble around about prayer, Bonhoeffer blesses such that the relationship with God is personal and precious. The power of Bonhoeffer's witness reminds one that we live a privileged life. Christians ought to have this in their library for rereading and rereading.

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