

Preaching with Variety, Session 3: Preaching the Psalms



Singapore Bible College Seminar by Dr. Jeffrey Arthurs in July 2014

Preaching Professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Uploaded by Dr. Rick Griffith • Singapore Bible College

All files in many languages for free download at BibleStudyDownloads.org

2 Timothy 4:1-2



In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

What is Poetry?

Try to define it.



Poets on Poetry



∞ The intolerable wrestle with words and meanings.

T. S. Eliot, *Time* (March 6, 1950).

∞ A poet is, before anything else, a person who is passionately in love with language.

W. H. Auden, *New York Times* (Oct. 9, 1960).

∞ [Poetry] has the virtue of being able to say twice as much as prose in half the amount of time, and the drawback, if you do not give it your full attention, of seeming to say half as much in twice the time.

Christopher Fry, *Time* (April 3, 1950).

Poets on Poetry



❧ Poetry is the revelation of a feeling that the poet believes to be interior and personal, [but] which the reader recognizes as his own.

Salvatore Quasimodo – Nobel Prize winner,
1959 – New York Times (May 14, 1960).

❧ The journal of a sea animal
living on land
wanting to fly in the air.

Carl Sandburg

Psalms are a sub-genre of the large genre called “poetry.” Psalms are *lyric* poetry.





The Bible “cannot properly be read except as literature; and the different parts of it as the different sorts of literature they are. Most emphatically the psalms must be read as poems; as lyrics, with all the licenses and all the formalities, the hyperboles, the emotional rather than logical connections, which are proper to lyric poetry.”

C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1958), 3.



“An understanding of the poetic system is always a precondition to reading the poem well.”

Robert Alter, “The Characteristics of Ancient Hebrew Poetry,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, Alter and Kermode, eds. (Harvard Univ. Press, 1987), 612.

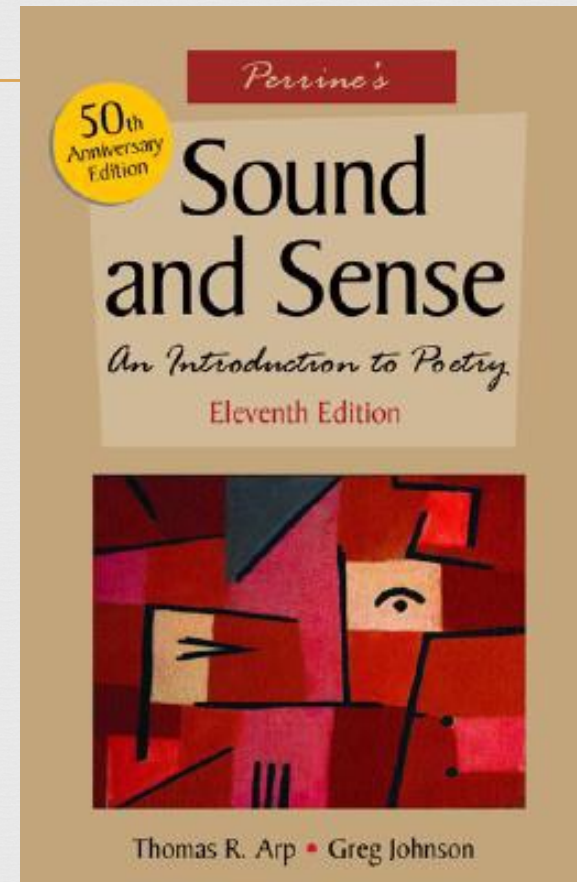
The Psalms as *Lyric* Poetry

☞ Short. Concentrated and compressed.



“Poetry is the most condensed and concentrated form of literature, saying most in the fewest number of words.”

- Laurence Perrine,
Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry



The Psalms as *Lyric* Poetry



- ❧ Short. Concentrated and compressed.
- ❧ Dominated by images, figurative language.

Note the concentrated images in Psalm 32.

The Psalms as *Lyric* Poetry



- ❧ Short. Concentrated and compressed.
- ❧ Dominated by images, figurative language.
- ❧ Often intended to be sung.
- ❧ Personal – expresses the thoughts and feelings of a speaker.
- ❧ Presents a sequence of ideas or a series of emotions.
- ❧ Dominated by the intricate system of parallelism.

What are the rhetorical effects of lyric poetry?



- ❧ Requires more participation of the listener than a propositional statement; forces the reader to ponder and meditate on a statement.
- ❧ Lodges in memory.
- ❧ Reinforces and heightens emotional impact.
- ❧ Intensification of parallelism.

How to Study Psalms as Lyric Poetry



1. Slow down. Appreciate the language.

“Lyric poetry demands that it be studied in its original language. Reading poetry in translation is like looking at a black-and-white picture of a sunset. The general patterns of the poet’s communication may be recognizable, but much of its brilliance and evocative power is lost. Even a good translation is a poor substitute for the original poetic text.”

Daniel J. Estes, “The Hermeneutics of Biblical Lyric Poetry,” *BibSac* 152 (1995).

How to Study Psalms as Lyric Poetry



- 1. Slow down. Appreciate the language.**
- 2. Discern structure.**

How to Study Psalms as Lyric Poetry



Small Structures:

Synonymous parallelism

Antithetic parallelism

Synthetic parallelism

Chiasmus

Antiphonal Response

For Example: The *qinah* meter



“This hollow, or limping, kind of verse tends to be associated with poems of lament. In the *qinah* pattern, the first poetic line is at least one word or grammatical unit longer than the second line, thereby giving us the most typical pattern of 3 + 2, but also patterns of 4 + 3 or even 4 + 2.



“The effect that the missing third element in the second line creates is one of hollowness of a limping gait. It is like waiting for the other shoe to fall, but it never does. This format adds to the dark mood and heavyheartedness that matches the content of the poem.”

Walter Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching From the Old Testament*

Psalm 77:1



I-cry to-God with-my-voice,
to-God with-my-voice,
That-he-may-give-ear to-me.

How to Study Psalms as Lyric Poetry



Large Structures:

Look for the “emotional outline” – the affective experience the poem re-creates.

Exercise:

Graph the emotional topography of Ps. 116

How to Study Psalms as Lyric Poetry

1. Slow down. Appreciate the language.
2. Discern structure.
3. Meditate.
 - ❧ Find a quiet place.
 - ❧ Try logosomatic reading. E.g. Ps. 116.
4. Read the text aloud or listen to a professional recording:
www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio

How to Preach Psalms in a Genre-Sensitive Way



1. Craft your language. "Show" as well as "tell."

"Write with verbs and nouns. The adverb signifies the failure to find the right verb; the adjective, failure to find the right noun."

- *Donald Murray*

Haddon Robinson

Psalm 23



How to Preach Psalms in a Genre-Sensitive Way



1. Craft your language. “Show” as well as “tell.”
2. Use parallelism (for the entire structure or sub-units).

Jeffrey Arthurs
Psalm 32, “Cover or Be Covered”

I have prayed more fervently for the Lions to win the Malaysian Cup than for my pastor, elders, and leaders. I gloated over Chelsea’s demise in the English Premier League.

I have complained excessively over the Mass Rapid Transit failures.

I pile my plate high in food line even though I can’t finish half of it.

I spend more time updating my Facebook status than updating my knowledge of Holy Scripture.

Who will confess?

Zipped into a parking spot in front of someone who got there before I did.

Look at myself every time I pass a mirror.

I wish other people would shut up so I can tell my story.

I have interrupted a slow speaker so I can say what I want to say.

I have promoted myself at every opportunity.

I have not considered others better than myself.

Who will confess?

I have spun the truth to make myself look good.

I have blamed others when I was at fault.

I have drugged myself with TV or the internet so I wouldn't have to think about my failings.

I have hidden.

I have clammed up.

I have pretended.

I have lied.

I have deceived.

I have tricked.

I have tried to cover my own sin.

Who will confess?

I have put down my friends.

I have cut up those I love.

I have blown up at those who matter most to me.

I have not prayed.

I have not sacrificed.

I have not stewarded God's money.

I have acted like it were my money.

I have not played my part in the Great Commission.

I don't care much about the Great Commission.

I don't care much about the poor, homeless, prisoners, infirm, illiterate, suffering, widows, and orphans.

I do care about myself.

I have taken up and set down and taken up and set down my cross.

I have not left all to follow him.

We sinners sin; we sinners confess.

How to Preach Psalms in a Genre-Sensitive Way



1. Craft your language. “Show” as well as “tell.”
2. Use parallelism (for entire structure or sub-units).
3. Create an emotional outline.
4. Match non verbal content to verbal (delivery).

John Ortberg
“Doing Justice” (tracks 26-29)
(Micah 6:6-8)



How to Preach Psalms in a Genre-Sensitive Way



1. Craft your language. “Show” as well as “tell.”
2. Use parallelism (for entire structure or sub-units).
3. Create an emotional outline.
4. Match non verbal content to verbal (delivery).
5. Use music.
6. Work in concert with the entire service.

Music and the Flow of the Service:



- ✧ End the sermon with a response hymn based on your psalm.
- ✧ Begin or end with special music that coordinates with the emotional and ideational content of sermon.
- ✧ Insert congregational song or special music in the *middle* of the sermon.
- ✧ Use musical background as the text is read.

How to Preach Psalms in a Genre-Sensitive Way



1. Craft your language. “Show” as well as “tell.”
2. Use parallelism (for entire structure or sub-units).
3. Create an emotional outline.
4. Match non verbal content to verbal (delivery).
5. Use music.
6. Work in concert with the entire service.
7. Use self-disclosure.
8. Use actual images.

Resource List



Anderson, Bernhard W. *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today*. Louisville: Westminster, 2000.

Billman, Kathleen & Migliore Daniel Rachel. *Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope*, Cleveland: United Church Press, 1999.

Brown, Sally & Patrick Miller. *Lament*. Louisville: Westminster/Knox Press, 2005.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Message of the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984.

_____. *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.

Jenkins, Michael. *In the House of the Lord*. Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN, 1998.

Kaiser, Walter C. *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.

Resource List



Mays, James. *Preaching and Teaching Psalms*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.

McCann, J. Clinton, Jr., and James C. Howell. *Preaching the Psalms*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

Miller, Patrick D., Jr. *Interpreting the Psalms*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.

Swenson, Kristin. *Living Through Pain*. Waco: Baylor Press, 2005.

Taylor, Gardner. *The Certain Sound of The Trumpet*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1994.

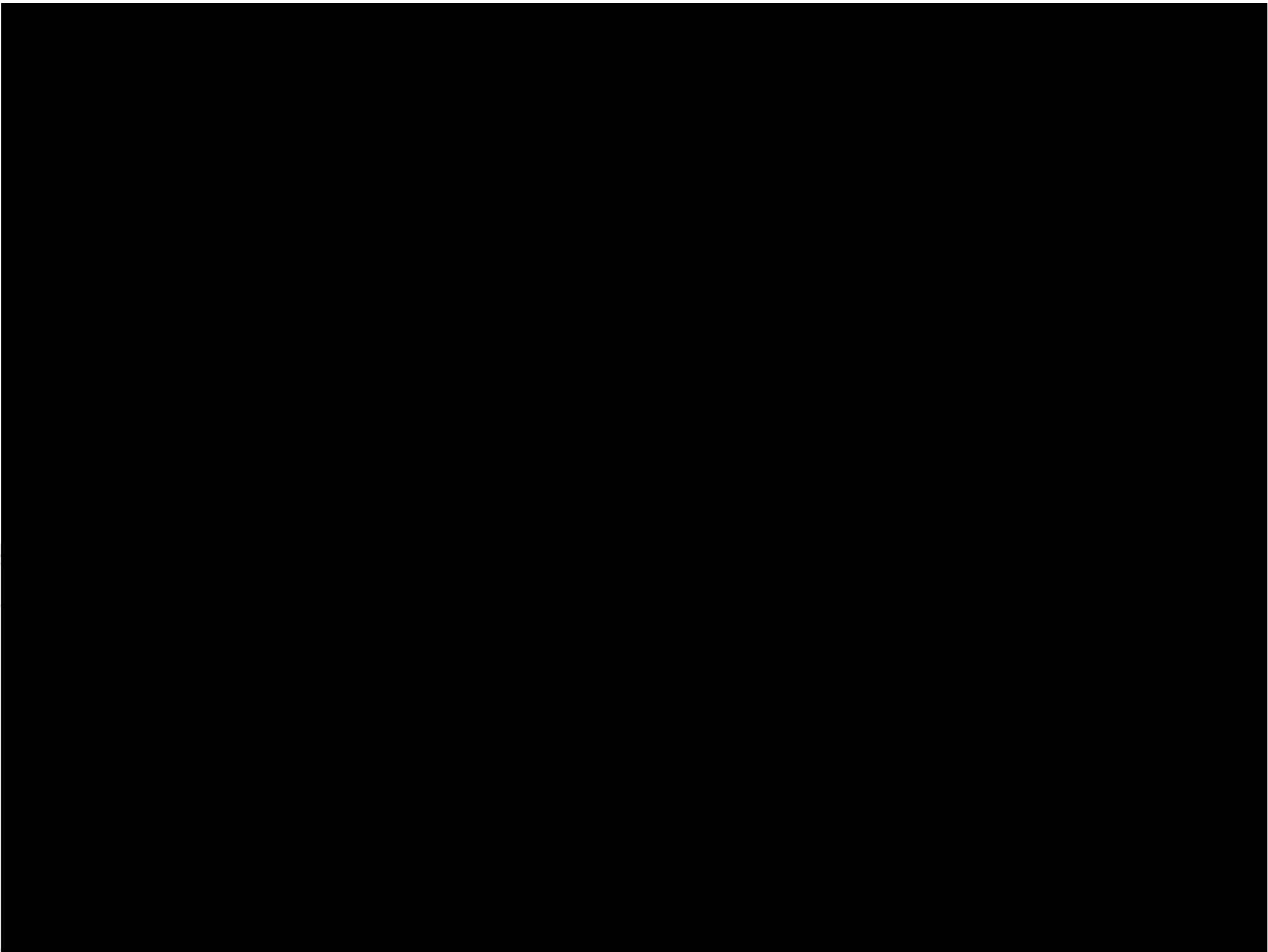
Westermann, Claus. *The Psalms*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980.

_____. *Praise and Lament In the Psalms*. Atlanta: Knox Press, 1981

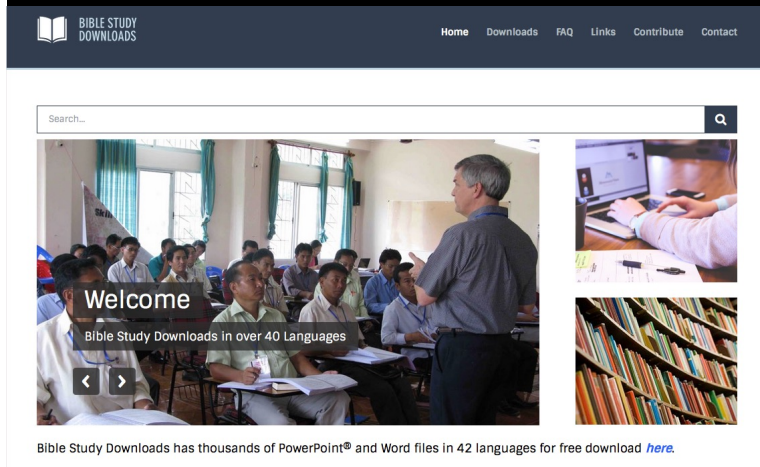
2 Timothy 4:1-2



In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.



Use this QR Code for Access



Homepage at BibleStudyDownloads.org

Get this presentation for free!



[Home](#) [Downloads](#) [FAQ](#) [Links](#) [Contribute](#) [Contact](#)

Search...



Bible Study Downloads has thousands of PowerPoint® and Word files in 42 languages for free download [here](#).

Preaching (Homiletics) link at BibleStudyDownloads.org