



Praying the Psalms in Advent: honest prayers for when life is hard PART 1

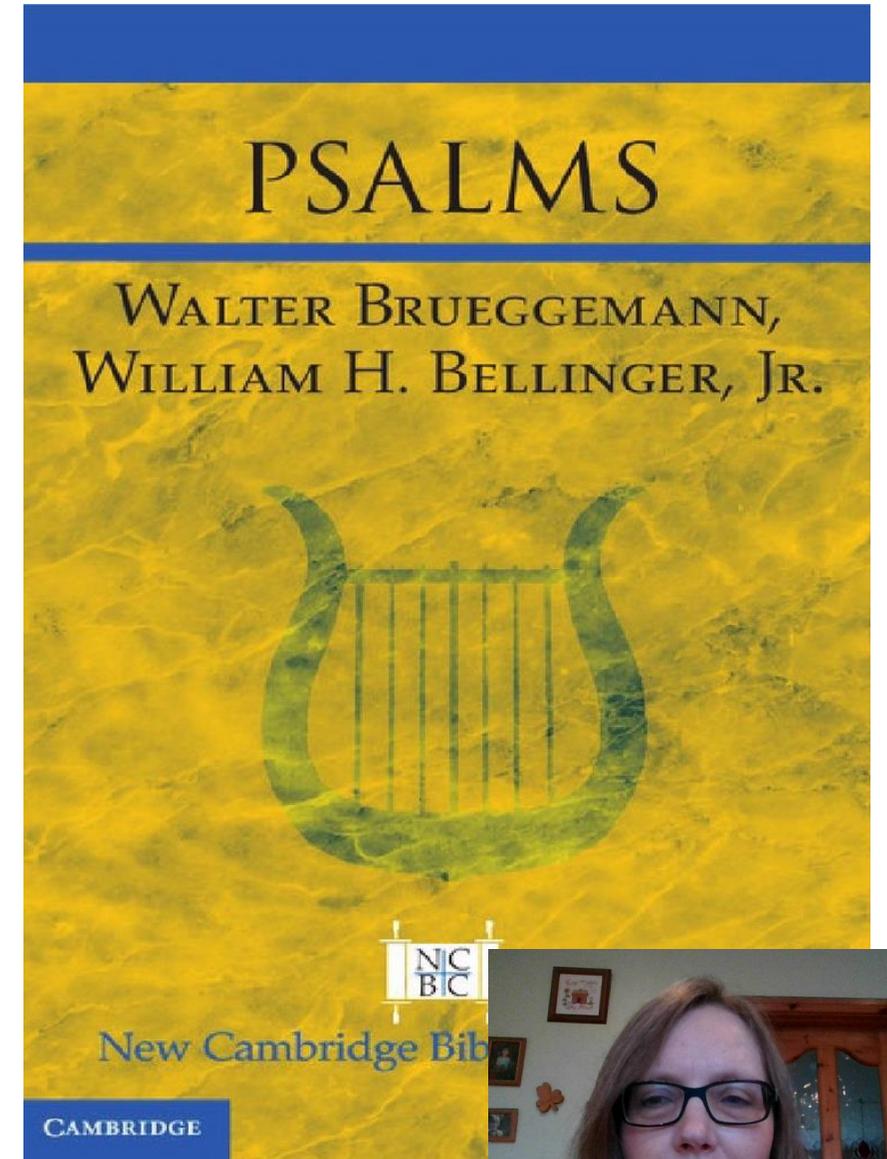
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A good commentary on the Psalms

Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger Jr,
Psalms, New Cambridge Bible Commentary,
Cambridge University Press, 2014.



Psalm 13

¹ How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

² How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

³ Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,

⁴ and my enemy will say, 'I have prevailed':
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

⁵ But I trusted in your **steadfast love**;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

⁶ I will sing to the Lord,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.



From plea to praise.

The movement in Psalm 13

- Elements of a lament psalm:
 - Invocation
 - Getting God's attention
 - Often includes "ascription of praise"
 - Complaint
 - Describing the crisis
 - Statements, not requests
 - Petition
 - Asking God to Intervene
 - Statement of Confidence
 - Reasons for confidence
 - (Vow of) Thanksgiving
 - Looking forward to when thanksgiving will be given for deliverance

"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. (Matt



How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever.

How long? Not long, because you still reap what you sow.

How long? Not long, because the arm of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice.

How long? Not long, 'cause mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

~ Martin Luther King Jr

A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King Jr, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 230.



Psalm 42

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

Where shall I come and behold the face of God?

My tears have been my food day and night,

While people say to me continually, 'Where is your God?'

These things I remember, as I pour out my soul:

How I went with the throng,

and led them in procession to the house of God,

with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,

a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you cast down, O my soul,

and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you

From the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts;

All your waves and your billows have gone over me.

By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,

and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

I say to God, my rock, 'Why have you forgotten me?

Why must I walk about mournfully because the enemy oppresses me?

As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me,

While they say to me continually, 'Where is your God?'

Why are you cast down, O my soul,

and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God: for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.



The rhythm of Psalm 42

Perseverance: this psalm does not take us all the way through to the other side, but it models honest, stubborn hope.

- Finding words and images for the longing
- Remembering joyful times
- Engaging in encouraging self-dialogue
- Beginning to find God in new circumstances
- Connecting with the enormity of the emotions
- Clinging to the faithful covenant God
- Addressing God directly and honestly to name the sense of abandonment
- Returning to the encouraging self-dialogue



Hesed

Steadfast Love // Lovingkindness // Covenant Loyalty

חֶסֶד

Bedrock:
a covenant-
keeping God



To think about

1. What crisis do you need to bring to God?
2. What will you say if you are speaking honestly?
3. What hopeful memories or faith convictions sustain you?

