

WRITING YOUR OWN PSALM

The time will come when you at last utter the speech which has lain at the center of your soul for years. I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly. How can they meet us face to face till we have faces? C.S. Lewis

The purpose of this exercise is to help you write and pray your own psalm. The goal is to express your heart in an unedited way, and to put words to your uncensored feelings. God invites you to bring your honest feelings even if they feel inappropriate. To pray your feelings is to pre-reflectively pour out your feelings to God—before editing your words. The more specific you are able to get, the better. There was nothing abstract about the ways you were wounded; you will be better able to access your true feelings by naming specifics and getting particular.

Some of the types of speech you may want to include in your psalm include: expressions of grief, expressions of anger at those who harmed you, expressions of anger at God, and requests that God be mobilized to act on your behalf. Writing and praying your own psalm will help integrate your brain and liberate your heart. The biblical examples that follow may help you find language for your feelings.

Examples of expressing sorrow to God:

My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long? Psalm 6

Why do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Psalm 10

How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? Psalm 13

My eyes fail, looking for your promise. I say, “When will you comfort me?” Psalm 119

Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt. We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant. Psalm 123

Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life. Psalm 142

Examples of expressing anger at those who have harmed you:

Rise up, Lord, confront them, bring them down; with your sword rescue me from the wicked. Psalm 17

Let their lying lips be silenced, for with pride and contempt they speak arrogantly against the righteous. Psalm 31

Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. O Lord, how long will you look on? Rescue my life from their ravages. Psalm 35

O Lord, you have seen this; be not silent. Psalm 35

Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause. Psalm 43

Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them. Psalm 54

Break the teeth in their mouths, O God; tear out, O Lord, the fangs of the lions! Psalm 58

See how they lie in wait for me! Fierce men conspire against me for no offense or sin of mine, O Lord. I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me. Arise to help me; look on my plight! Psalm 59

May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever. Pour out your wrath on them; let your fierce anger overtake them. Psalm 69

May my accusers perish in shame; may those who want to harm me be covered with scorn and disgrace. Psalm 71

Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them! Psalm 74

Remember, Lord, how your servant has been mocked. Psalm 89

Rise up, O Judge of the earth; pay back to the proud what they deserve. Psalm 94

May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me without cause. Psalm 119

In your unfailing love, silence my enemies; destroy all my foes, for I am your servant. Psalm 143

Examples of expressing anger at God:

O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer. Psalm 22

I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for you are the one who has done this. Psalm 39

I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" Psalm 42

How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Psalm 82

Why, O LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me? Psalm 88

It is time for you to act, O LORD; your law is being broken. Psalm 119

Following are questions for you to consider before you begin writing. These questions may help you access sorrow, grief, and/or anger. Jot down whatever feelings/thoughts come to mind in the spaces provided.

As you reflect on your story in your family of origin, what are you sad about? What are you angry about?

What unmet longings do you need God to hear and respond to?

Have you ever felt abandoned by God? If so, when?

Where do you feel disappointed by God?

What is the “speech that has lain at the center of your soul”? What is your real complaint against God?

Look back on your answers above, and begin putting words to your own Psalm on the pages that follow.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.