

*I had a dear friend who was struggling terribly with questions and doubts about God and faith. He told me, "The pastor keeps telling me to 'look to the Psalms.' I've tried that but it seems like all the Psalms are about complaining and whining and yelling at God. They're no help to me whatsoever."*

*This was my response to him.*

You say you've been told to "Look to the Psalms", but they don't mean anything to you except some ancient men whining and crying about how hard they have it.

You should look to the Psalms. But you have to look beyond the moaning. Almost all of the Psalms are a lament. Yes, the psalmists were crying. They were in bad shape. They felt abandoned. They felt so full of despair they couldn't go on. They felt rage. In other words, they felt just like you do.

But you've got to read beyond that. Read through their pain. Read through their rage. Read through their doubt. Those laments turn into praise. They end on a note of joy.

The psalmists used their songs to rage at God, to question God, to release their despair. But after their song was done they had release, they had freedom, they had joy. None of the release, none of the freedom, and certainly none of the joy was at all possible until they had worked their way through the pain, the rage and the doubt.

Look to the Psalms and then start writing some Psalms of your own. Put down your feelings of abandonment, your pain, your rage, and your despair. Spill it out to God. Believe me, he's a big boy. He can take it.

But use your Psalm not as a vessel to hold all your pain, but as a funnel to focus it and make it come out where you want it to. Make it work for you. Focus all that pain, all that rage, all that despair. Focus it on God, let him have it all.

Once it's all out of you, there will be a great big hole left in you. That hole hurts! I know it does. I've been there. But that's where the psalmists used their song again. They used their song to fill that hole up again. They didn't let it fill up again with rage, or pain, or despair. They used their song to find even one little thing to praise God for, even if it was as small as a blade of grass waving in the midst of dry ground. That little tiny bit of praise hits that great big hole and all of the sudden it explodes into the most glorious sunrise just waiting for you to marvel at the goodness of God.

Find one little thing to praise God for. Maybe it'll be some little thing one of your children will say to you. Maybe it'll be an unexpected check in the mail. Maybe it'll be that beautiful flower, blooming where no flowers should be. Whatever it is, grab onto that one little thing, praise God for it and then wait. Wait for the joy to explode within you.

I've been there. I know the despair and the emptiness. Once you sing your lament, it's easy to crawl into that big hole and pull up a blanket of despair and feel like you'll stay there forever. Don't let yourself do it. Once you've emptied that hole, don't use yourself to fill it up. Find something to praise. Find a joy. Find one little thing that makes your heart sing its happy song again. Then let that new song fill up the hole.