

## Writing Psalms (Instructions)

I created a series of questions for children to answer in the development of writing a psalm. The age of the children will determine how long it will take to get the answers. Older children can probably answer all the questions in one sitting or do them as homework. Younger children can handle up to about five - seven questions in an hour. Some of the questions need explanation to make certain the child understands what's being asked.

Have a sheet of paper with each pupil's name and the questions. If the children can print or write their answers - great. If not, don't hesitate to be the scribe. Even the older children love to have you write their words on paper.

Take some of the Psalms listed in the Bible Character section of KK and notice what is included in the Psalm.

For example **Ps 100:1-5**

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. [Say something nice about God!]

Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. [Say something about how glad we are to serve or belong to God and how we do that.]

Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. [What do you know about God and your relationship to Him?]

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. [What should we do for God?]

For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations. [What is true about God?]

Take any number of Psalms and look at them in light of what they are trying to accomplish. Once your students see a pattern or you've decided on a pattern, select questions from the list below and then list them in the order that you want to see the shape of the psalm. After you've gathered the answers, type out or print their psalm.

The students get pretty excited about their ability to write down their ideas. Caryl Krueger's article explains how to develop the parallel structure of the psalm. Synonymous structure - the first part of the line makes a statement and the second part echoes or repeats the meaning of the first part.

Example: **Ps.92:1** Lord, it is good to praise you. [1st line of the verse]  
Most High God, it is good to make music to honor you. [2nd line restates the first]

Another type of structure is the antithetical. First line states, second line is the opposite.

Example: **Ps 1:6**

For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: [first line] but the way of the ungodly shall perish. [the second line is the opposite of the first line]

There are other types, but these are the easiest to teach children.

Now try the following questions. I've listed the five-year-old's response below.

1. What would you like to say to God?
2. What do or would you thank God for?
3. What makes you happy or glad?
4. What makes you sad?
5. When are you afraid? [if they haven't been introduced to any concept of fear, you might want to skip this and the next question.]
6. What makes you afraid?
7. What do you need help with?
8. Where is God?
9. How do you know God exists?
10. How have you been blessed by God?
11. Why should we obey God?
12. Do you have friends?
13. What do you like about your parents or friends?
  - a. Are those comments true about God as a parent or friend?
14. Do you have enemies?
  - a. How can you love your enemies?
15. Sing a song to God.

After you have their responses to the questions, put them in an order - with praise in the beginning and closing, the tough answers to life's questions in the middle.

**Here is an example from a five year old.**

## **Psalm 151**

Thank you, God, for keeping me safe. I love you.

You made everything here on earth. You are very helpful all around the world. I'm glad you made us.

Thank you, God, for making me glad. Thank you, God, for loving me and my family.

Thank you for loving my brother and seeing his needs. Give him the strength to walk, run, and jump. Keep him from falling and feeling sad.

Hold me tight the way I hug and kiss my Mom.  
Help me not feel hurt when my parents say, "No."

Please help me feel safe when the lights are out.  
I am grateful for you, God, and all that you have made.

**JMB**

It really was quite simple and effortless. These children have not had any formal spiritual training in church or the home.

Get a nice piece of paper and let them draw an appropriate picture to go with their psalm.

Post these masterpieces on a bulletin board at church.