Moses Project Spiritual Practices Fall 2021

**Praying with the Psalms**

The Psalms might be considered the original prayer book. Joy, anger, despair, trust…these ancient songs touch on the full gamut of human experience, all offered to God in prayer. No matter what we might be feeling, it’s likely that we can find ourselves somewhere in the Psalms, which can empower us to offer God even the messy, uncomfortable parts of ourselves. You may find meaning in simply praying a psalm as written. You might also consider some of the variations found below.

Paraphrasing a Psalm: Paraphrasing a psalm invites us to pay attention to what a psalm is saying and how it is speaking to us. Choose a psalm and rewrite it in your own words. Think about modern images or words that express the feelings and experiences in the psalm in today’s language. If you’re not sure where to start, consider Psalm 16, 46, 121, or 139.

Writing a Reverse Paraphrase: A reverse paraphrase can help us to hear familiar words in new ways. Begin by paraphrasing each verse to convey the OPPOSITE of what the psalmist is saying. When you are done, read through your reverse paraphrase. Have you ever felt this way, or can you imagine what it might be like to feel this way? Next, prayerfully read through the original psalm to hear afresh the power of the words conveyed in this psalm.

Write a Psalm: Write your own psalm as a way of expressing your thoughts, feelings or experiences to God. You might begin by reflecting on an existing psalm that resonates with you. Then set it aside to put your own experience into words.

In a Group: Print copies of a familiar psalm on one half a paper and share with your group. Invite them each to paraphrase the psalm. Encourage participants to share their version at the end. Reflect with the group on their experience engaging familiar words in a new way.

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Andrea Severson is a licensed mental health counselor and spiritual director. Her degrees include a Master of Science in counseling from Drake University and a Master of Divinity from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. She holds a certificate in spiritual direction and is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. Andrea enjoys hearing the unique stories of the individuals and couples with whom she works.  Her areas of interest include anxiety, depression, trauma, identity, faith and spirituality, life transitions, and relationships.  Andrea is a member of the American Mental Health Counselors Association and Spiritual Directors International. In her spare time, she likes reading historical fiction, listening to the Beatles and camping.