

A Brief Set of Exercises for Classroom Use

An excerpt from *The Biblical Psalms in Christian Worship* by John Witvliet:

This book is appropriate for use in classes in Old Testament, preaching, worship, and church music.

Teachers might consider adapting some of the following exercises for classroom use.

1. Find two or three musical settings of a particular Psalm. Compare how faithful they are to the Biblical text, and how well they encourage the congregation to participate in the unique dimensions of the text.
2. Imagine preaching on a particular Psalm. Explain how you would want the Psalm rendered in worship in a different way after your sermon than before it. List the different ways that the Psalm or portion of the Psalm could be incorporated throughout a given worship service or liturgy.
3. Prepare a text for a prayer that is based on a free paraphrase or adaptation of a given Psalm.
4. Prepare a paper on one of the themes in the first part of this volume, explaining how some specific Psalms might be rendered in worship in ways that make these themes clear.
5. Identify a group of 2-3 Psalms that would be especially appropriate for use in both worship and in pastoral care visits in hospitals, nursing homes, or prisons. Prepare a brief introductory statement for you would introduce those Psalms in both a worship and pastoral care setting.
6. Prepare and one sentence introduction to a Psalm texts that could be spoken in worship (or a three sentence introduction that could be printed in an order of service) to help worshipers pray it more knowingly.
7. Prepare a readers' commentary on a given Psalm, suggesting how a public reading can best interpret the text. Footnote your gleanings from commentaries, looking for ways that academic study of the text can be reflected in oral interpretation.
8. With an interlinear translation and academic commentary of the Hebrew text at your side, compare at least four translations or paraphrases of a given Psalm. List improvisations on the text that you find both textually faithful and lyrically compelling. Also list improvisations that you find to be unfaithful to the text or lyrically ponderous.
9. Take a particular Psalm, imagine a non-church-going friend or acquaintance, and write a brief letter to them explaining how the Psalm might speak to their life.