

Pattern your prayers after Psalms: a lament when surrounded by adversity...

1. Study Psalm 3. How would you characterize verse 1?

This is the *address* element of the Psalm; it describes whom the lament is addressed to. "O Lord" is the psalmist's call to God.

2. How would you characterize verse 2?

The *complaint* element follows; it describes the heartfelt distress of trouble and why help is being sought. At the end of verse 1, the psalmist describes numerous foes and in verse 2, the taunts of his enemies are described. Parallelism is at the core of Hebrew poetry and this verse is an example of synonymous parallelism, which is the most common form of Hebrew poetry. In this example: the second line advances the concept of the first ("...how my adversaries have increase!" and "Many are rising up against me.").

3. How would you characterize verses 3-6?

Verses 3-6 are the *confession of trust* element; it is a declaration of trust in the Lord. Described as a "shield," the psalmist finds comfort in the metaphorical description of God's protection. There is trust in protection, in answered cries, and while asleep. So resolute is his trust that he is fearless of the opposition.

4. How would you characterize verse 7?

Verse 7 has two elements: *petition / deliverance* and *assurance / praise*. The first part, the *petition* ("Arise,..! Deliver me,..!"), is a plea for help. It is another example of synonymous parallelism. The latter part of verse 7 is the *assurance*; it is the complete confidence that God will deliver. In this synonymous parallelism, the imagery is one of a knockout punch, and the psalmist writes as though God has already destroyed his foes.

5. How would you characterize verse 8?

Verse 8 is the final element: *praise*. The psalmist praises God for His faithfulness.

Psalms have several distinguished composers: David authored 73, Moses authored 1, Solomon authored 2, etc. Their purpose was to worship God in a heartfelt manner through musical poems. Instead of being instructive, Psalms are principally for guidance; they provide an example of how one can communicate their thoughts and feelings while still remaining faithful and dependent on God.

It is believed that David wrote Psalm 3 when he was fleeing from Absalom (2 Sam 15 - 2 Sam 18); thus, many Psalms may have a historical connection. Psalm 3 is an example of a Lament. It has 6 successive elements to its structure:

1) Introduction or address, 2) Complaint, 3) Confession of trust, 4) Petition or deliverance, 5) Confidence or assurance and 6) praise.

As inspired prayers and hymns, Psalms offers an example of how we may communicate with God. In the case of adversity, a prayer of lament is one such example. From the pattern above, one can observe some interesting details. For instance, notice that the **complaint** is followed by the **confession of trust** and that the **petition** is followed by the **assurance**! Notice how many verses are spent on each. What does this reveal about the lament? Do your prayers have elements? How are those elements balanced? What are your prayers for help like? Take a look at the Psalms and discover other details that could help your prayer life!

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3. How would you characterize verses 3-6?

4. How would you characterize verse 7?

5. How would you characterize verse 8?