



Psalms for Children

Don Y. Gordon

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When I was the father of three little girls, I used to read the Bible to them at bedtime. It was one of the favorite moments of my day, and these moments now stand as some of my most cherished memories. Because some of the words were difficult for a child to understand, I did some “on the fly” editing, changing words or phrases to something they could comprehend. The Psalms did not hold the intrigue and suspense of many of the narrative sections of the Bible, but they still held the seeds of poetry that sprouted into delight. The Psalms began to shape the concept of God these children were hiding in their hearts. When reading the Psalms, I wanted to respect the meaning of the text and use the language other translators had created, but find a way to connect with the girls I knew and loved best. Most of all, I wanted them to grow to love the Bible as I did. I hoped they would hear the majestic praises, heartfelt laments, and exhortations to righteousness that are found in the Psalms and “hide them in their hearts so they would not sin against God.” These daughters are grown and out of the house now, studying at their universities or divinity schools, and still reading in their beds at night just as I am. Now that I am having my first ever sabbatical after 27 years of ministry in local churches, I wanted to take some time to convert some of those memories into written treasures for other parents, children, and grandchildren. That’s why I’ve created this book of Psalms with illustrations. I have extracted 25 of some of the most memorable, powerful, and child-friendly Psalms in the Bible and edited them in such a way that they will be comprehended by a child. Appreciating the diversity of the Psalms, I made an intentional effort to include all kinds of Psalms: praise, thanksgiving, lamentation, confession, wisdom, and trust. I have attempted to paraphrase these Psalms, using language and imagery appropriate for children, while remaining faithful to the spirit of these texts. Some explanatory notes along with some conversation questions are included in the back for those who might find these useful. My hope is that you will create your own special moments of reading and talking about God and the Bible with your own children, grandchildren, or any young person you love. I am grateful to Yates Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina for providing sabbatical time in order for me to carry out this dream. I am indebted to Dr. Andrew Wakefield, Dean of the Campbell University Divinity School (CUDS), and Irma Duke, Director of Church Relations at CUDS for providing space and hospitality at the beautiful Campbell campus, which enabled me to complete a large portion of this work. I am grateful to Dr. Tony Cartledge, Professor of Old Testament at Campbell University Divinity School for the wise counsel he provided, though I would not want to lay the burden of theological accuracy on his shoulders. I thank my wife, Elizabeth, and three daughters, Sarah, Hannah, and Rebekah, for being sources of joy and inspiration to me for more than 27 years. I pray this book will contribute to lasting joy and a deeper love for God for all who might pick it up to read, see, and reflect on the glory and goodness of God. Soli deo gloria. —Don Gordon, 2013

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