"Twinkle, twinkle, little star" What do you sing to your babies? Twinkle Twinkle Little Star? Rock-A-Bye baby? What do you read to your babies? The Three Bears or The Three Little Pigs? Nursery rhymes, maybe sing some Christian songs? We didn't have any of those things.

Even before my son was born, I would read and sing the Psalms to him. All 150 of them. Imagine me… with baby Jesus, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures: he leads me beside the still waters."[1] A very special person wrote that.

Jesus knew the Psalms before he could walk. He could recite all 150 Psalms by heart as an older child. I know, I know…you're probably thinking he had a pretty big advantage since he was Jesus, but, at least half of the Psalms were written by his ancestor, King David. Jesus absolutely loved the Psalms.

Besides, you probably know 150 songs by heart yourself, and our memories were much better than yours. We did the same things you do to memorize better…put words to music, used rhymes, alliterations, acrostics.

Many people today consider Psalms to be poetry, filled with flowery language and symbolisms, but not very useful for specific theological issues. Jesus did not feel that way.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus quoted from the Psalms. His mastery of them allowed him to confound the religious experts about the most important topic of the time, the subject of the Messiah. Jesus asked them, "Whose son is the Messiah?" Now, the experts didn't know everything about the Messiah, but they were sure of one thing…the Messiah would be from the house of David, one of his descendants.

Jesus took their answer and completely crushed them. First, he told them that David was speaking by the Spirit when he wrote. Next, he quoted from Psalm 110: verse 1, "The Lord said unto my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'" Jesus looked at them and said, "If David called him Lord, how can he be his son?"[2]

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[1] Psalm 23:1-2

[2] Luke 20:41

From that encounter, the religious experts should have started learning from Jesus who the Messiah really was. Instead they continued to follow their own inaccurate perceptions….and that would lead to Jesus' physical death…and their spiritual death.

David wrote psalms throughout his life, regardless of his circumstances. He wrote whether he was being treated as an outlaw by King Saul or he was king himself. He wrote whether he was happy or sad, rich or poor, safe or in grave danger. He wrote songs of praise to God, but also complained to God. He wrote about whatever was important to him. That's one reason so many people have always related to what he wrote.

So whether you are happy or sad, prosperous or poor, safe or in danger, you will find Psalms to comfort and encourage you…or maybe accompany you as you suffer through a situation. No matter how much you think you know about God and his ways, the Psalms can shine light on new facets of God. Just think of how the world would change if everyone followed the first few lines of the First Psalm: "Blessed is the person who doesn't walk with the wicked or stand with sinners or sit with those who scorn, but who delights in the law of the Lord and who meditates on it day and night."[3]

"Meditate on it day and night." Where do you suppose that line might have come from? Go back in time to when Joshua first took over from Moses. He was about to take leadership over multitudes of people, to be a general over a vast army. Rather than a thick book of instructions, here is what God told Joshua to do…take the book of the law and meditate on it day and night![4] Oh, and guess what! Jesus is the English name for… Joshua!

More important than King David's feelings, was his faithfulness to God. His writings portray a man completely devoted to God. He knew that God was God, and he was not. He completely understood that he was God's servant.

God himself testified that King David was a man after God's own heart.[5] What do you think that means, "a man after God's own heart?" If you read the Psalms, there are many things you will learn about God's heart.

God wants to be recognized for being who he is. One definition of the word "glorify" is to recognize the true worth of something. When David stops to think about who God is, he drops to his knees in awe and wonder. David recognizes that the whole world of nature stands in awe at the glory of God. As he wrote in Psalm 96,[6] "Give to the Lord the glory due to his name…let the earth be glad, let the sea roar… let the fields and everything in them be joyful, let all the trees of the forest sing for joy."

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[3] Psalm 1:1-2

[4] Joshua 1:8

[5] Acts 13:22

[6] Psalm 96:8-12 The psalm is not attributed to David in the Bible, but many scholars believe he wrote it.

People sometimes ask me what was Jesus' favorite scripture. Makes me smile…it's like asking a parent which is their favorite child. Jesus absolutely treasured every verse of Scripture, because it is all God's words. Buuuuut, if I was forced to pick one verse from *Psalms* that he loved, I would choose, "Open my eyes that I may understand wondrous things in your law." Psalm 119: verse 18.

Jesus knew that to truly understand God's Word, you have to read it, meditate on it, discuss it with others, and have God open your eyes. He was willing to do that because he treasured every word from God.

What might it do for your understanding if you quoted that verse every time you started to read the Bible… "Open my eyes that I may understand wondrous things in your law."[7]

One of the many benefits of *Psalms* is how it was used to bind the Jewish community together. The Hallel is a Jewish prayer which is the recitation of Psalms 113-118. It's recited on such joyous occasions as Passover, Hanukkah and Rosh Chodesh.

Another example of a binding use of the Psalms is the way we used the fifteen songs found in Psalm 120-134. These had various names such as the Song of Ascents, Song of Steps, or Pilgrim songs. Four of these are linked to David, and one to Solomon. Among other things, these were sung or recited by the Jewish pilgrims as they traveled to Jerusalem for the three pilgrim festivals.[8]

Imagine twenty families ascending the hills toward Jerusalem, chanting those psalms in unison, over and over. The ecstasy and rapture they would have on their faces when they finally reached the Southern Steps of the Temple, and recited one psalm, taking one step, reciting another, taking another step…until they finished all fifteen psalms!

God is merciful and loving. God is just. God is compassionate. God is patient. The list goes on and on and on. If you want to know the heart of God, read the Psalms.

You cannot read any of Psalms without seeing that David was as close to God as to any human being. David talked to God like he would to any person. God wants to have a close relationship with his people. Do you want to know God? Read the Psalms! Many were written by a man who had the heart of God.

Is it important to know God? It is so important that Jesus addressed the topic with some of his last words. Not long before Jesus was betrayed and killed, he prayed to God. Here is what my

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[7] John Barnett is one of the finest Bible students in America. He says he does say this prayer before every study session.

[8] Deut. 16:16

son said … “This is eternal life, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”[9] Eternal life is knowing God and Jesus! I know them both. Do you?

[9] John 17:3