

## Writing Your Own Psalms

If you're more comfortable writing freestyle, write your psalm however you'd like. But if having some structure is helpful, you might want to follow the patterns and features of biblical psalms.

For instance, one fundamental feature of biblical psalms is something called parallelism.

- You'll often see an idea in one line that's repeated in the next line:

Psalm 78:1

*Pay attention, my people, to my teaching,  
Be attentive to the words of my mouth.*

- Or the idea in one line is stated in *opposite* terms in the next line:

Psalm 1:6

*The Lord protects the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the wicked will perish.*

Another common feature of biblical psalms is the use of creative language such as:

- Imagery that calls up an evocative mental picture

Psalm 22:17

*Dogs surround me,  
a group of evildoers encircles me.*

- Similes

Psalm 17:12

*They are like a lion eager to tear,  
like a young lion lurking in ambush.*

- Metaphor

Psalm 18:2

*The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,  
my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,  
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

You also might find a topical Bible helpful. (You don't have to own one – you can find them online.) A topical Bible takes passages of Scripture and organizes them by topic. So, for instance, you could look up the word "gratitude" and among the scripture references listed you'd find Psalm 100, which is all about giving thanks and praise to God.

The exercise:

- Find a comfortable desk or table to write on. Gather writing materials and a Bible.
- Pray for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- Identify what you would like to express to God.
- When you're ready, write your own original psalm based on your feelings or longing. Or if you prefer, choose a psalm that expresses some of what you are feeling and rewrite it in your own words. Be as honest with God as the psalmists are.
- When you're done, read your psalm aloud to yourself.
- Finally, offer it to God as a prayer.