

Psalm 112: A Life Transformed into His Likeness

Psalm 112 is a wisdom psalm that partners with the hymn of praise to YHWH in Psalm 111. **Psalm 112** showcases how one whose core essence (“heart”) trusts steadfastly in YHWH becomes increasingly “YHWH-like” in attitude and action. This transformation happens by YHWH’s works and word. Look for what **Psalm 112** show us about how to experience this “blessed” transformation.

Both **Psalm 111 and 112** were thoughtfully, meticulously constructed as alphabetic acrostic poems, Short Acrostics, each one using all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet to start each half verse with those successive letters. (Psalm 119 is a Long Acrostic with eight full verses of poetry for each letter of the alphabet.) Acrostic lines usually begin with Hebrew nouns or adjectives. This alphabetic approach was probably a memory aid (think of how the first letter of a name helps you remember the name) and also was a “manifestation of comprehensiveness.” (Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, p. 399) **Psalm 111-112** show us the “A to Z” of YHWH and of the one who entrusts his or her life to YHWH.

In *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid*, Walter Brueggemann contends that the Psalms always call us back to the giving of *Torah* at Sinai, not to impose legalism, but to make us think about “a light yoke and an easy burden that is an alternative to the hard yoke and heavy burden of our closely held world world of relentless deadlines and constant productivity.” (p. 34) Brueggemann uses **Psalm 112** as an example of a wise life lived by “norms given by God that are firm and nonnegotiable...yet always under interpretation and reformulation.” (p. 34) Here’s how Brueggemann introduces **Psalm 112**:

The foolish, unnormed life, of course is not so. Fools never make it to Sinai; they think there is no god; they think they can do as they wish without destroying self or neighbor. *But we who read the Psalms know better.* The counter-world found there is not a jungle. There, might does not make right, and our life is not a tale told by an idiot. No. *In the Psalms, we are lined out as our best selves.*

It is the work of the Psalter to populate our world with the character of this God. *Where this God governs, the world is transformed and transformable.* It becomes a place of joy and duty—of joyous duty—a place of buoyancy and risk. Even so, we itch to be left in a joyless, duty-free world that is noticeably short on buoyancy and empty of serious risk. (Brueggemann, *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid*, pp. 34-35, Italics in the quote are mine)

In *The Case for the Psalms*, N.T. Wright also observes that “the Psalms themselves indicate that the human beings who sing them are actually being changed by doing so.” Reading and praying the Psalms changes one’s

innermost self, one's heart. Bishop Wright believes that when someone decides to study the law of YHWH and to keep it with his or her whole heart, real transformation starts to happen. Psalms not only enable people to be aware of this possible change but actually help to bring it about. N.T. Wright sees the person described in **Psalms 112** as a transformed human being, already displaying the character of YHWH himself, steady and constant. He sees this transformation as a foreshadowing of the ultimate transformation of all creation in the new life of resurrection. He sees praying the Psalms as a way to "stand at the borderlands..at the overlap of God's space and our own, and the place where the ultimate new life of resurrection is already making inroads into our material being. (N.T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms*, pp. 155-159)

1. **Psalms 112** can be taken as a calculating guide on "how to be happy," and used to teach the "prosperity gospel." How does its claim go well beyond that? How is **Psalms 112** echoed in Jesus' teaching? (Matt.5:6 is one example. What are some others?)

2. Respond to this quote from Patrick Reardon's *Christ in the Psalms*:

The deeper message of these psalms, however, is Christological before it is moral, for our righteousness is ever a sharing in the righteousness of Christ. That is to say, the wise man, who fears the Lord and greatly delights in His commandments, is, in the first place, Jesus the Saviour. He it is, described here as generous and just and unshaken, as leaving a seed powerful on the earth, as being had in eternal remembrance. (Reardon, *Christ in the Psalms*, p. 222)

3. Psalm 111 is entirely focused on God, his works, his faithfulness, his covenant his name until the last verse. How does that verse connect with **Psalms 112**? What is the "*fear of the LORD*" mean to you now and how has that changed over time? What does *righteousness* mean to you in **Psalms 112**?

4. **Psalms 112** shows us how someone lives when their roots are growing deep (Psalm 1) and when their crown of honor and glory matches with their actions. (Psalm 8).

Psalms 112 places happiness in the context of praising God, respecting and loving God, and delighting in his commandments, *torah*. Some common interpretations of New Testament epistles maintain that the gospel is the antithesis of the law, *torah*.

Why do you either agree or disagree with those interpretations?