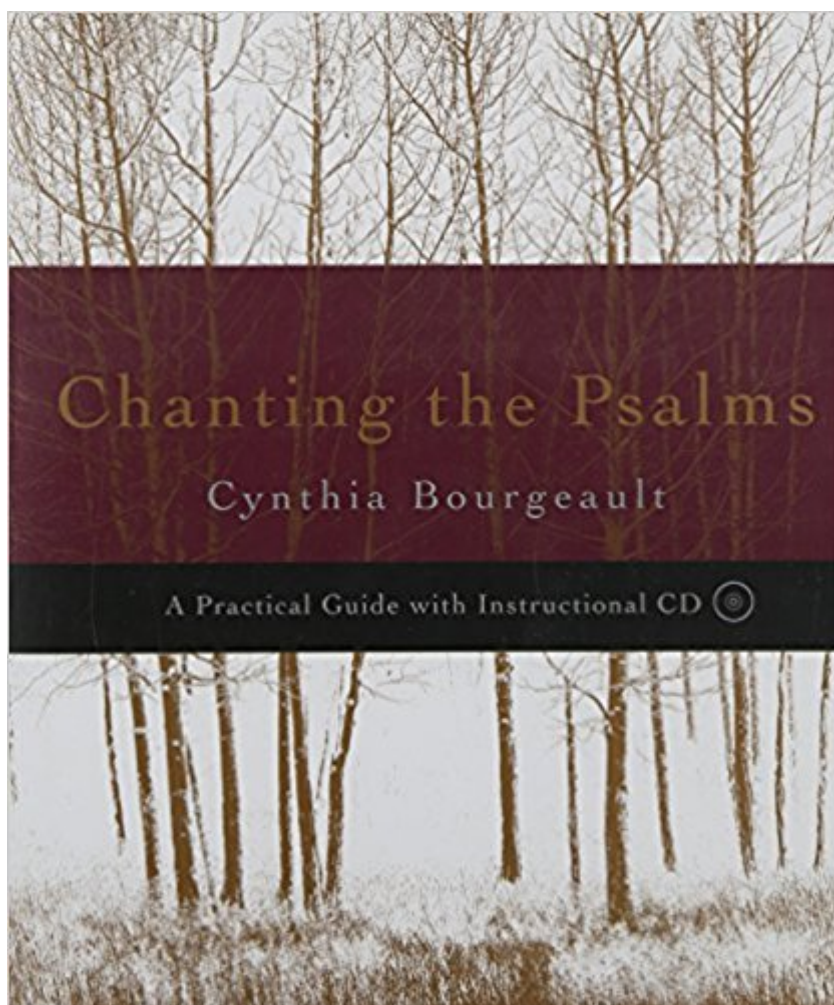




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Chanting The Psalms: A Practical Guide With Instructional CD



Synopsis

Chanting the psalms, or psalmody, is an ancient practice of vital importance in the Christian spiritual tradition. Today many think of it as a discipline that belongs only in monasteries—but psalmody is a spiritual treasure that is available to anyone who prays. You don't need to be musical or a monk to do it, and it can be enjoyed in church liturgical worship, in groups, or even individually as part of a personal rule of prayer. Cynthia Bourgeault brings the practice into the twenty-first century, providing a history of Christian psalmody as well as an appreciation of its place in contemplative practice today. And she teaches you how to do it as you chant along with her on the accompanying CD in which she demonstrates the basic techniques and easy melodies that anyone can learn. “Even if you can't read music,” Cynthia says, “or if somewhere along the way you've absorbed the message that your voice is no good or you can't sing on pitch, I'll still hope to show you that chanting the psalms is accessible to nearly everyone.”

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. The pointed and shaking finger of our adamant inner schoolteachers often accompanies calls to engage and stick with ancient (read: tried and proven) spiritual practices. Not so with Bourgeault's impassioned invitation to chant the Psalms. With a blend of Christian and Eastern mysticism running throughout, as well as recognition that learning to chant may be difficult, she gently guides readers through the "whys" and then through the "hows." Bourgeault, an

Episcopal priest with a doctorate in medieval studies/musicology, clearly knows her material, but presents it simply; see the chapter on "Suzuki Psalmody." The companion CD, illustrating the various techniques, encourages even the most vocally challenged reader to try the chants.

Bourgeault's focus is not only on chanting, but on chanting the Psalms specifically, asserting that chanting them helps to integrate the shadow and heal the personal unconscious, as well as awaken the intuitive imagination. The book's final section explores other contemporary and popular forms of chant and song, including Taizé and Lona. Bourgeault will be a helpful guide to those who seek to find a viable daily Christian practice, while those who already have a daily discipline may find that her suggestions for chanting deepens and enlarges their experience. (Dec. 12) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Bourgeault will be a helpful guide to those who seek to find a viable daily Christian practice, while those who already have a daily discipline may find that her suggestions for chanting deepens and enlarges their experience." — Publishers Weekly, starred review "The best book I've seen on the theory and practice of Christian contemplative psalmody." — Thomas Keating, author of *Open Mind, Open Heart* and *Finding Grace at the Center* "Few books ever manage to both inform and enthrall in equal measure the way this one does. The whole world of Christian spirituality owes Cynthia Bourgeault an enormous debt of gratitude for having given us a classic." — Phyllis Tickle, compiler of the *Divine Hours* series "Cynthia Bourgeault, a skillful teacher, offers you all of the do-it-yourself instructions you need to thoroughly enjoy the sacred tradition of chant and so step from time into the eternal Now." — Br. David Steindl-Rast, OSB, cofounder of gratefulness.org

Ignore negative criticism of this book. It has changed the way I pray and has allowed the meaning of the psalms to explode before me. My prayer life that has always tended toward the contemplative side has only become more so since learning how simple chanting can be. This book has made clear why chant and psalmody is vital for Christians. Once you start chanting the psalms, suddenly it is hard simply to read them again. Cynthia Bourgeault has given me a gift for which I can not thank her enough.

This book is well-written and inspiring. Better still, it's nicely balanced so that there's something to be gained from it no matter what your previous level of experience and knowledge of music is. The author gives good insights into why chanting is useful to spiritual practice, how to choose a

translation of the Psalms to work with, and introductions to several basic styles of chant, all of which are demonstrated on the accompanying CD. There is more than enough information given to start your own practice of chanting, and it leaves you excited to begin.

Purchased as a gift for my boss. She reports she loves it!! Book looked great, peeked at it before wrapping it to give away. Read some very moving passages. Service and price were great!!!

Our adult faith formation team was doing a study of the Psalms. On our last session, I used the materials in this book to try chanting them. It was an incredibly powerful experience. I'd done chanting on my own with the book, but corporate chant was an entirely different experience. I was amazed at what we were able to do in just one session; we started with the monotone and then worked in increments up to singing in fourths. A few people in the group would be considered "musical", but the group as a whole was definitely not. Nonetheless, we sounded good and were more in tune than any Sunday Service, possibly because we were really listening to one another. Bourgeault's small steps and "this is for everyone" stance made the experience accessible to everyone. It was a new and powerful way to experience the Psalms, and a great counterpart to our more academic study. Update: A little over a year later, and with a different mix of people, we again "chanted the psalms" as part of a Lenten prayer retreat. We were just as successful, and the results were just as powerful. We even gave it a try (with a mix of those who had and had not done it) as part of evening prayer before a committee meeting. Not quite as successful, but everyone was intrigued and we decided to do it again next month.

I have great admiration for Bourgeault. As a musician, I am considering forming a chant group. This is the best resource I have found.

Like all her books, thoughtful, clearly written, and a very practical guide to chanting the psalms.

This book fills a needed spot for me. It is everything that its title promises, being very practical and very good at guiding the reader to whatever level of involvement you want. The material on the history of Gregorian Chant satisfied my curiosity about that. I chose not to bother with the details of that form of notation, but there is enough in the book to make a good start at learning how to read it. The CD is all that is promised, being of good quality.

Wish I'd found it years ago. First half is an excellent section on the value of daily Psalm chanting; second half is nuts and bolts -- including extremely basic, anyone-can-do-it starting tones. Accompanying CD is very helpful. If you want to chant the Psalms, don't waste your time reading anything else first. Start with this, then move on to other supporting works after you set up your practice.

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