



SOUTHLAND CHURCH

BOOKS I & II OF
PSALMS

Psalms 1-72

32 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

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DAY 1**INTRODUCTION**

The Psalms are some of the most expressive books of the Bible! As you read through the Old Testament from the beginning, you go through the books of the Law and then History. These books are factual, and let us know how God related to humanity, and how they related to others.

The Psalms, on the other hand, are 150 very emotional, completely individual and separate works demonstrating the private and public emotions and heart of a people or nation towards God. In the verses of these Psalms we'll encounter rage, fear, depression, exceeding joy, peace, restfulness, thankfulness and so much more.

Many of the Psalms are written by David. However, there are a few written by other authors. Some of those we are completely certain of, and others we simply cannot be sure. Regardless of who authored the individual Psalm, we can see the fingerprint of God as the Divine Author as themes, and even wording, throughout the Psalms follow significantly similar threads.

Psalms, quite simply, are songs or poems. It is likely that in the original language it might have rhymed or been rhythmic. English translations lose some of that sing-song quality, however, most Bibles are formatted more like poetry making it visibly different than the narrative books of the Bible.

The Psalms have been used for centuries – and even to this day – for teaching doctrine, recounting history, offering praise and thanksgiving, as well as pleading with God for help and answers. We may even recognize songs from today's repertoire in the words we read.

According to the New Testament the Psalms are for our practical use among believers. Ephesians 5:19 says, *“addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart”*. We see a similar verse in Colossians 3:16: *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

The Psalms have something for everyone! Regardless of personality, position, or purpose this book will encourage us, teach us, challenge us, and fill us with hope for the future!

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Thank the Lord for the book of Psalms that models an emotional, healthy and vibrant relationship with God. Pray that God would give you special insight into His heart *and* yours as you go through these devotionals.
2. Some people have reservations about a book of the Bible with 150 chapters, doesn't have a story-line, and can seem repetitive. Ask the Lord to reveal any hesitation you have about going into this, and to give you a promise or picture of what He wants to do in your heart as you go through it. If you have no hesitations at all, express your excitement for this journey in a prayer. (Or *sing* your praise to Him!)
3. Ask the Lord to open your spiritual eyes, ears and mouth as we go through this to use what you read to encourage and teach others, just like Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 tell us to.

BOOK I: Psalms 1-41**DAY 2** **READ:** Psalms 1-3

God's hands-on involvement in the happenings on earth is a clear theme in these Psalms. It is clear that He is not a far-away, distant Deity, but rather a very personal God who takes interest – even passionate interest – in the details of both individuals and nations.

In Psalm 1 we learn how God interacts with people differently depending on whether or not they obey Him. He gives special attention and protection to those who make the Lord and His Word their delight. Verse 6 teaches us God “knows” or “watches over” the way of the righteous. This gives us a picture of God being closely involved. Like a parent “watches over” a child as she learns to walk, she moves obstacles out of the way, picks her up when she stumbles, then scoops her up with a whoop of joy when she finally runs. Yet, those who choose wickedness have a different experience. Instead of the hands-on, personal God of the righteous, they experience distance and ultimately, demise.

Even nations, according to Psalm 2, attract the attention of our ever-involved God. He watches and listens as nations and government leaders shake their fist at God and His ways. He laughs. He scoffs. He rebukes. He warns. God is clearly involved in the goings on of world politics!

The author of Psalm 3 actually addresses the issue right off the top in verse 2. People are saying God will not rescue him. They don't believe God is involved enough to actually make a difference! Yet the author gives beautiful examples of how God is dynamically involved. He explains how God shields and protects him, and gives him dignity. He knows God hears him and answers his prayers. Even when things are going crazy he sleeps well because of God's attention, and wakes up because God sustained him. God has removed his fear even with enemies on his doorstep.

This author has no doubt. He has *experienced* God. No one can tell him otherwise!

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Reflect on your experiences with God. Ask Him to bring to mind times when He has intervened in your life. Spend some time in thanksgiving for His active involvement.
2. Ask God to show you if you have any unbelief in your heart regarding whether or not He truly longs to be involved, and *is* involved, in every area of your life. Confess and ask God to plant this truth deep in your heart with a word, thought or picture.
3. Reflect on a prayer request you have that may seem *impossible*. Pray and ask God for a sign or sense of His involvement in this particular request. Then take a few moments to pray for it again, this time with confidence in a God who cares about the details.

DAY 3 **READ:** Psalms 4-7

This series of Psalms really model how we should trust in God when our circumstances don't seem to display His goodness.

Psalm 4:4 may seem a little out of context on first reading. Yet it's a powerful verse and a changing point for the Psalmist. The Psalm starts with a plea to God for help. We understand that. We know how desperate we can get for God's help in our distress. We

get to the point where the biggest thing we want to know is whether or not God is paying attention. We scream to the heavens, “Just show me You are listening!”

The Psalmist moves on though, as we often do, to pointing our eyes towards those who have hurt or offended us. We feel the pain others cause us so deeply it's often all we can see.

This could get the Psalmist stuck in a cycle of self-pity, but he doesn't stay there. That's where verse 4 comes in. We might visualize the Psalmist suddenly sitting up straight in bed in the dark of night, a new realization hitting him. He says to himself, “*Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.*” From this point on the Psalmist has a different perspective. He concentrates on his own heart and not on the troublemakers.

We can take a lesson from this teaching Psalm. When we are offended or frustrated or somehow in a difficult place it seems natural to lay on our beds getting angrier and angrier. We lose sleep and replay conversations in our head of what we should have said, or what we'll say next time. The Psalmist reminds us that even in our anger we should refrain from sinning, and instead consider our own hearts.

2 Corinthians 10:5 says “...*take every thought captive to obey Christ...*” It's so easy to sin in our thoughts when we are offended or have been mistreated. The model here shows us to search our own hearts and be silent; to turn off the conversation in our head that is not honoring to God. From this point in the Psalm we see a change in his heart. He trusts in the Lord and asks the Lord to let the light of His face shine on Him. His prayer has changed from “Get me out of this distress!” to “Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord.”

Verse 7 and 8 really speak to the change that can happen when we focus on the Lord. He fills us with joy. We are able to sleep in peace. Our time of distress becomes better than the best we've ever experienced.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. What are some of the difficulties you are facing right now or have faced recently? Take a few minutes to journal a prayer asking God for help in this situation. Pray in faith knowing God wants to give you joy and peace during this time.
2. Ask the Lord to remind you of times when you've not taken your thoughts captive. Confess and ask the Lord to speak to you of His forgiveness, His perspective, and to fill you with joy.
3. Psalm 17:7 is a verse of praise and thanksgiving. Spend a few minutes listening as God reminds you of things you can be thankful for – both the good and the not-so-great – and then give Him praise for all He's done.

DAY 4 **READ:** Psalms 8-9

What a great God we serve! Psalm 8 prompts us to open up the windows and look outside. God's creation and majesty is available for us to see first hand. Verse 3 invites us into the creation process to see God's hands in the act of Creation. We see His fingers creating. The vignette juxtaposed on our minds with these words is of a magnificently large God holding the massive sun and moon between his thumb and forefinger so he can carefully put it in just the right place. As we consider how gigantic this God must be that the creation of the sun and moon are merely finger work for Him, we can understand why the psalmist would

ask, “*who is man that you are mindful of him?*” Not only is it mind blowing that God would care so deeply for people who are like specks of dust when compared to the size of the sun, but God made these little creations (humans) to rule over the earth. Incredible!

The picture puts things in such dynamic perspective. A massively powerful God holding the sun between his fingers. Next to that sun is a tiny little planet. On that planet are people. Those are the people in charge. This makes no sense in the context of ability. It is obvious from this perspective that humans will not be able to manage this as well as God can.

So the Psalmist sings the last verse with exuberance. “O Lord, our Lord...” Lord simply means ‘the one who has authority, power and control’. The Psalmist knows this better now after seeing the magnificence and majesty of God and the smallness of humanity. To use the title ‘Lord’ is more than truthful and begins to express our humility. It is only natural that God’s name should be praised as majestic in all the earth. This song has come full circle. From seeing God’s creation and praise for Him growing out of that, to a deep-hearted understanding of this truth on a whole new level.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Reflect on nature. Ask God to bring to mind places you have seen, the night sky, or other memories you have in nature that have (or will today) inspire you to see the magnificence and majesty of God. Write out a prayer of praise to God for His amazing Creation.
2. Considering the definition of Lord, ask God if there are any areas where He is not the Lord. Confess if necessary and ask the Lord to give you a heart that willingly submits to His majesty and sovereignty.
3. Pray for the church leadership and staff today. Pray they would see God’s majesty in today’s happenings and have hearts that are willingly submitted to His Lordship. Thank God His leadership of His Church, and the leaders He’s placed over you.

DAY 5



READ: Psalms 10-11

Psalm 10 deals with an issue many of us have observed: the wicked prospering. The Psalmist describes someone who is wicked yet gets what he wants; who has enough money to bless those who are as wicked as he is, and who never gets caught for his evil deeds. The writer sees the evil, and the people in the wake of it. The wicked ones don’t even pay attention to God at all except to make fun of Him, and yet everything works out for them.

How often do we feel this way? We see people who seem to have every blessing. Everything they touch turns to gold. They have a beautiful family, and great jobs, and high incomes, and health, and beauty... and it seems to never end. To top it off, they don’t give credit to God! They live like God will never hold them accountable for their actions, just like verse 13 says.

In some cases it’s not just that they don’t acknowledge God, but they are overtly against God and all He stands for. They even attack the people who love God. Psalm 11:2 talks about how they purposely shoot their arrows at the ones who are godly. They are on the attack.

The Psalmist is tired of this and begins to engage his heart with who God is. As He goes through listing the things God does and how He handles things, he is reminded of eternity and the truth that justice **will** win.

He reminds us that God is the helper to the fatherless. He breaks the arms of the wicked and evil men. He looks ahead to the day when everyone, even those for whom everything always goes their way, will have to give an account to God. The Psalmist isn’t looking into next week, or month or year... but to that day when God is going to ask every person to give an account, and they’ll have to answer. They’ll have give an account for every word, thought, and deed they have done.

This brings the Psalmist great hope because he trusts that God’s character and His promises are true. Psalm 11:4-6 makes it clear God’s justice is sure. He will not let evil go unpunished. There will be a reckoning.

When we look at today’s news and current events it might be easy to be discouraged. With wars and rumors of wars, government leaders in so many nations who lie to get into power so they can mismanage money and people to bring their sinful agenda into law and practice, it’s easy to be disheartened and think the evil will never end. However, these Psalms remind us God is in control. The peace and prosperity the evil ones experience now is only short-lived. God’s justice **will** be served. It may not be today, but their day **is** coming.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask God to show you if there is a secret jealousy toward those who are wicked (basically those who are not following Jesus) because of their success and prosperity. Confess and ask the Lord for a vision of His eternal justice.
2. Meditate specifically on Psalm 11: 5a. Ask the Lord to examine your heart and show you anything within you that needs to be confessed, specifically in regards to how you treat those who do not have family, parents, or children. Is there something He wants you to do to grow in this?
3. Ask the Lord to bring to mind someone (a person or people group) who has or is suffering because of someone else’s wickedness. Pray for the God of Justice to hear their cries and encourage them with help, safety, and a hope for eternity.

DAY 6



READ: Psalms 12-14

Psalm 12 speaks about the power of words. More specifically, those words used for deceiving, flattering and boasting. Verse one of this chapter is interesting as it states that there are no more godly people left! We know this is does not actually mean there was not a single godly person left on the earth. What this indicates is that the culture of the godly has become infected with sin - the sin of the mouth and tongue – so much that it seems like there are no godly left.

It speaks about lying, flattering, deceiving, boasting and maligning others. It’s sometimes easy to think about these sins as ‘no big deal’ if we do them. They bother us and make us angry if those words are against us. Yet in comparison to the words of the Lord (verse 6) we can see how absolutely vile they really are.

Verse 3 & 4 talks specifically about those who believe they can say what they want. They believe they are masters of their own words. Verse 7 mentions ‘those people’. ‘Those people’ are the ones whose words and lips are not pure and holy. This begs the question of us, “Is Jesus the functional Lord of our words or are we one of ‘those people’?”

Psalm 13 is a prayer many of us have prayed. We beg God to answer us, how long? We struggle though trauma, death of a loved one, depression, illness, any kind of difficult long-term situation, and we get to the same place as this Psalmist: O God, how long until I hear

your voice again? How long until this pain ends? The Psalmist reminds God that if this goes too long the enemy just might win. He begs God for hope to go on. He doesn't want to give up, but he's afraid he won't be able to hang on.

Somewhere between verse 4 and 5 the Lord must have given this writer a *rhema* (a word specifically for him at that time and place) because his hope is renewed. His trust is rebuilt. He knows God's love toward Him is unending and his heart is rejoicing so fully that he can sing. This is the path of prayer for us. That we might be honest with the Lord how we feel and struggle so that He might speak to us and renew our faith and our hope.

Psalm 14:5 is a key verse. We may think we are weak because of any number of reasons. We may think we are ill-equipped to fight against those who are stronger than we are. Yet, no matter what we are up against, the Lord who is among us is stronger still. Not only is the Lord our safety and refuge, but He is also our strength. His presence with those who obey Him is a strong and mighty power. God's presence alone is such a powerful force it changes things. His presence with us becomes our refuge.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord to speak to you about your speech. Are your words in line with His character? Is He the Lord of your words? Confess if necessary and submit your words to His Lordship.
2. Reflect on a struggle you are currently having. Ask the Lord for a *rhema* (a word, thought or picture) that will renew your trust in Him and His unending love and give you hope for the future again. Write a prayer of thanks for what He showed you.
3. Think about a difficult situation you are facing right now. Ask the Lord to reveal your inner thoughts on this. Do you feel like you fighting this alone or do you sense the presence of God with you and know Him as your refuge? Confess if necessary and invite God into the battle and ask Him to be your refuge and leader.

DAY 7



READ: Psalms 15-17

Psalm 15 is a very practical Psalm. It clearly teaches what it looks like to live a holy life. It starts with a simple question: Who can live in the presence of God? The easy answer is anyone who is holy. But what does that look like? How can we know if we fit the bill?

The Psalmist lays it out for us very simply. Those who stay away from sin and do good. Those whose speech is holy. Those who despise sinners and honor God's people. Those who keep their promises even when it hurts and handle their money according to God's principles. Wow! He makes it clear that holiness is a whole life activity. It's not a Sunday morning event, but a practical, day-in and day-out way of living, thinking, speaking, working and behaving.

An apt title for Psalm 16 might be 'An Example of Humility'. The Psalmist makes it clear from the beginning that apart from Him he has nothing good. Everything good comes from God. Not only that, the Psalmist decides he will accept as good all that God gives him. He chooses to delight in the saints. He accepts God's location for his home and the financial security He has, not as his own planning and ability, but God's direct gift to him. He acknowledges it is the Lord who speaks to him and gives him wisdom. It seems from this passage that not only does the Lord speak to him but the Psalmist also listens for Him. This kind of relationship of humility toward the Lord gives him security and rest. There is no drive to succeed that will

burn him out. There is no fear for losing everything, because even if he does, he knows full well that eternity is full of pleasures for him. What a beautiful life his is!

Psalm 17 brings back the theme of holiness in verse 3-5. What a challenge! The Psalmist gives a challenge and invitation to God: *Go ahead and test me God, but you will find nothing*. How many of us would feel confident to say this to the Lord? What if we lived every moment of every day in such a way we could?!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask God to evaluate your lifestyle and to speak to you about one area He would like you to work on. Write down what He says. Confess any sin and invite Him to give you strategies on how to move forward.
2. Write a prayer of thankfulness for all the good things God has placed in your life. Spend time in worship and praise.
3. Invite God into your day to speak to you as the day goes on about how you are living. Ask Him to point out areas you are growing, doing well and that need improvement. Thank Him that by the power of Christ in you, you can live in confidence, power and holiness of Christ.

DAY 8



READ: Psalm 18

This Psalm was sung by David here, and in 2 Samuel 22:1-51. It is David's testimony about God's forgiveness, might and grace. It's a reminder of what happens when people follow the Lord and obey Him.

By this stage in David's life he's been a shepherd. He's killed Goliath. He's been Saul's friend, and enemy. He's led a band of Mighty Men, and commanded the allegiance of a nation. He's been a war hero and king. He's been the husband of several wives, and a father to many. He's been an adulterer and murderer. He's mourned the deaths of sons and his best friend. He's been pursued and he's been the pursuer. He's the anointed of the Lord and holds in his heart an eternal promise. By the time David sings this song, his life is just about over.

Of all his accomplishments though, what he has done best is learned who God is and how to love Him. David praises Him in the first few verses and we can see by His choice of words what His relationship with God is like. It's chock full of strong descriptive words of God. Strength, rock, fortress, deliverer, shield. This is his experience of God.

Starting in verse 19 we see even more depth to this relationship. Not only is David thrilled about winning wars and being rescued, he is confident in his blameless way. Wait, what? David blameless? Everyone knows he committed adultery and murder. So how can he now say he's been righteous?

If we look carefully we can see David show us the answer. Starting in verse 22 we begin to see glimpses of David's experiences. He says the faithful find God faithful. He speaks from experience, likely remembering his faithfulness as a shepherd which was the very thing God used to promote him to king. When he contrasts purity and the ways of the crooked, it might be he's remembering the days he lived with a pure heart, running from a crooked king. Verse 27 brings us to David's lowest point. We can almost see the tears slip down his face as he recounts from experience how God saves (forgives) the humble and brings low the haughty. It is right at this point when David gives credit back to God, letting us know it was God who turned his darkness to light.

He says for everyone to hear: God’s ways are perfect. We know the whole story. We’re aware of his sin. Yet David wants us to know God’s forgiveness is sure and His ways are perfect. He is our shield. He is our refuge if we hide ourselves in Him.

This is David’s testimony and invitation to each of us. He is challenging us to examine our lives, our sin, and see if we have run to that place of refuge and shelter. He invites us to submit to the faithful ways of the Lord because God’s ways are perfect. Even the discipline. Even the pain. Even the sorrow. He wants us to know the God who forgives and restores the adulterer and murderer – and every other sinner – so he or she can now say, I am blameless before God, and His ways are perfect. Can we say that today?

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Think back over your life, like David did in this Psalm, and ask God to show you some words and phrases describing who and what God has been and done for you during your life. Write these down and give thanks to God. If you are creative, write a poem or song or psalm of your own as a gift to God.
2. Ask Jesus to speak to you about your past sin and His forgiveness. Do you stand in the confidence of your blamelessness before God because of His forgiveness, like David did? Or do you still feel and act as if His forgiveness cannot wash away your shame? Ask God to speak His truth into the deepest part of your heart concerning His forgiveness. Thank Him for His blood, which covers ALL our sin.
3. Ask Jesus to speak to you about how you view the difficult situations in your life. David says God’s ways are perfect. Can you honestly say that about your life? About the difficult situations? Ask God to work in your heart today with words, pictures, scripture and thoughts to reveal to you that even in the darkest hour, His ways were, and are, still perfect. Journal what God shows you.

DAY 9

 **READ:** Psalms 19-21

Psalm 19 is a personal prayer. He speaks of the ‘speech’ of the heavens. No matter where one lives or what language one speaks, the heavens clearly communicate the glory of God. He starts with a huge, universal view of God that’s for everyone. Then he moves on to praise the Law of the Lord, and the statutes in it. This brings the glory of God into a very tangible, available realm of life. His love for God’s Word, Law and teaching is clear. The Psalmist says it’s these words that bring life and sustenance. He then brings it even closer to home. He opens his heart – asking forgiveness from hidden faults – to the glory of God. This prayer began with worship of a mighty, magnificent God and ends with a personal prayer for forgiveness and submission. This is an excellent model for us, especially in those times when we don’t know what to pray.

When we pray for others many of us get stuck knowing exactly what to pray for. This is especially true when we begin to pray blessing for those who have hurt and offended us. Psalm 20 provides us with the very words to pray when we don’t have words of our own. Praying Scripture is something we know Jesus did and we can, too. It works its way into our hearts as we pray the words, and it also affects those we pray for as God uses His Words to answer the prayer. Sure, we have to change a few words here and there, but it gives us the skeleton to start with. Reading the verse in the Bible, then praying it in our own words for our friend (or enemy) allows us to pray some of the very things God wants to do in both us and those we pray for.

Much like the previous Psalm, Psalm 21 is a prayer for someone else, in this case a leader. Here the Psalmist is thanking God for the good things He has given the king, and praying for his success. When we pray for our leaders (government, church, or work leaders), we can use this to get ideas for what and how to pray. Not all our leaders are like the one this Psalmist sings about! They don’t all rely on God and give Him glory. It is our privilege to use a prayer like this to guide our words and thoughts as we pray. When the Psalmist says, “... the king trusts in the Lord ...” we might use it to pray that one day our leader might trust in the Lord. God gives us tools and equips us with His word to fulfill the calling and mandate He has given us to pray for others, especially our leaders. What a great gift this series of Psalms is as we learn to pray for ourselves, and others!

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask the Lord how He wants to speak to you today: through the magnificence of creation, through His Word, or directly to your heart. Listen to/Do what He says and write down a few words of praise for how He reveals Himself to you.
2. Ask God for the name of someone He wants you to pray for today. Perhaps a friend, someone you need to forgive, a non-Christian friend or family member, or someone you haven’t thought about in a long time. Pray through Psalm 20 for them, adjusting the words to make sense.
3. Ask God for a leader (can be government, church or work leader) He wants you to pray for. Listen quietly for anything specific God wants you to pray for. Pray for what He shows you, and pray Psalm 21 for them as well. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct your prayer very specifically because He knows the details of this person when you might not. Write down what He shows you and pray!

DAY 10

 **READ:** Psalms 22-24

Psalm 22 follows an interesting path. It begins with the Psalmist crying out to God because he feels forsaken. He doesn’t feel like God is hearing or answering his prayers. Then in verse 4 he reminds himself, and God, that his family before him had been saved by God. He knew their story and it brought him hope. Perhaps if God did it for them, He could do it for him. In verse 6 he’s back to seeing his own weakness. From verse 9 through 11 though, he is remembering the faith he was brought up with. His identity with God has history and is not isolated in the events of the moment. The truth of the testimony of the Lord and his heritage begins to give him hope. Surely if God can do miraculous things for my fathers and grandfathers, he can do them for me!

By verse 12 he is again reciting his troubles to the Lord. He is acknowledging his neediness. In verse 19 things have changed. He’s no longer asking “God, where are you?” Instead, he’s confidently asking God for help. Why? Because the testimony of others brought him hope!

In verse 22 the Psalmist commits to testifying himself, and encouraging others to sing praises about the feats of the Lord. He sets out a challenge to tell others what God has done because others who are feeling weak, downtrodden and forsaken need to know what God has done so they can have hope for what He will do. From verse 26 till the end, the Psalmist is reminding us of the future coming when all the wrongs will be put right. He’s got an eternal perspective shaping his hope now as well.

He reminds us that everyone, one day, will kneel before the King of kings. The last two verses serve as a challenge and motivation. Future generations will be told about the Lord,

people will be proclaiming God's righteousness... not just for a year or two... but even to those generations still not born. The Psalmist has been so transformed by the truth of God through testimony he challenges us. Will the generations coming after us see the glory of the Lord through our testimony?

Psalm 23 follows this nicely as a beautiful testimony of God's provision, protection and promise as a Shepherd. As David, the shepherd, wrote this we know he knows what he's talking about. As he shepherded his father's sheep faithfully, he has experienced God shepherding him. He shared this testimony so we, too, would draw close to God as our Shepherd.

Psalm 24 is an invitation to draw near to God, love Him, praise Him and experience Him. This invitation is for now, and an invitation for eternity. It ends on a question we all must ask ourselves: Who is this King of Glory?



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask God to remind you of a testimony you've heard that brought you hope, encouragement or conviction. Thank God for His life-changing work in the lives of others. Pray for the person who shared their testimony with you, and thank God for them.
2. Ask God to show you things He has done in your life and record them in your journal. Ask God to show you who needs to hear your testimony – either casually in everyday conversation, or formally in a planned get-together. Ask God to give you opportunities during this next week to share with others the things He has done in your life.
3. Ask the Lord to reveal to you whether or not you have passed on your faith through testimony to your children, grandchildren, friends, family or co-workers. Do the people closest to you know your faith story? If you have kept His glory hidden, confess that to Him and ask for courage and opportunity to share it. If you have been faithful with it, ask Him for more opportunity and the blessing of seeing fruit from your faithfulness.

DAY 11



READ: Psalms 25-26

Both of these Psalms talk about the Psalmist (David in both cases) living a blameless life. His desire is to walk with integrity. It is clear David's hope is in God's faithfulness to those who fear Him. He is in a tough place again. Enemies. Struggles. Life is hard and David needs to know where his safety net is. As we read through Psalm 25 we see where that safety net is. It is firmly in the faithfulness of God.

David is quite clear about the fact that God is faithful and loving. Yet he is also clear there is a part to play for individuals. Verse 3: Those who hope in the Lord (our part) will never be put to shame (God's part). Verse 10: God's ways are loving and faithful (God's part) to those who keep His commands (our part). Verse 14: The Lord confides (God's part) in those who fear Him (our part). The Psalmist commits his way to the Lord because he longs for the kind of relationship with God in which he can be confident God will do His part. This Psalm displays the beauty of a relationship between God and man where man needs God's help to love Him, obey Him, and even have the breath to praise Him; and where God's gifts and promises are handed out in abundance because of man's faithfulness. This two-part harmony is what makes a relationship with God so dynamic and powerful. You can't have one without the other.

The confidence David has in his relationship with God is evidenced in the way he prays. He asks. He asks boldly. He tells God about his integrity! How often do we grovel before the Lord instead of walking confidently into the throne room of God secure in His forgiveness and our position as His children? He says to the Lord "turn to me", "look at me", "guard me". There is no question the Lord will answer. He regularly asks the Lord to examine his heart and forgive him (verse 11). This is a man who walks in the truth of the Word of God. If God says he's forgiven... he is. If God says He'll do something... He will. These truths affect David's thinking and living. Our relationship with God should be as dynamic and confident as David's with the Lord. Is it?



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Like David teaches us in Psalm 25, God wants us involved in a dynamic relationship with Him so He's given us things to do, and He reserves the much larger part for Himself. Ask the Lord if there is something you have been praying for that He can't give you yet because He's waiting for you to do your part. If there is, ask Him to help you do your part and commit to doing it. If not, ask Him for next steps to get closer to Him in this dynamic relationship.
2. Ask the Lord to show you if there are any areas where you are not secure in His forgiveness of your sin, or maybe one particular sin. Ask the Holy Spirit for a verse, or thought or picture of how complete His forgiveness is toward you. Journal what He shows you.
3. Ask God to show you if there's something you haven't asked Him for because you lack the confidence. Or ask Him what He wants you to ask for so you can ask in confidence. Journal how you feel about asking God for blessing or miracles. Spend time in prayer over the things He's revealed to you.

DAY 12



READ: Psalm 27-28

David is the author of both Psalms. Psalm 27 shows us David's again. We see him fluctuate between confidence in God's provision and faithfulness, and the fact that God's faithfulness may not look like he'd like it to.

In the first three verses David tells the Lord of his confidence in Him. He is surrounded by enemies. Things could go downhill quickly, but he sings about how the Lord will save him. Then we see the heart of David revealed in verse 4. He tells the Lord he wants to be in heaven with him if his battle isn't won on earth. As confident as David is that God will answer His prayer, he cannot be certain the answer to the prayer will be what he'd like. He wants to be prepared for any answer God gives – including that of his own death.

He then continues to praise God for his faithfulness, and the mighty things God has and will do for him. David feels strongly that God can and will do anything for him! This is confirmed for us in verses 13-14. David is "confident of this", that God will bless him, give him the desire of his heart, make him a victor again, and bless him with goodness, in this life. He is willing to wait until heaven if that's what God's plan for him is. Yet, he is confident he won't have to wait that long.

Psalm 28 again shows us David crying out to the Lord for help. This time his enemies are not nations or armies coming up against him. This time it's people. Neighbours. Friends. This can be the most difficult battle to fight. When people we know and care about hurt us, our hearts are damaged. When we run or fight for our lives, as David had to many times,

there may be physical loss or damage. The heart, however, normally stays in tact. When our hearts are damaged it is very different.

In verse 3 we see his battle is with people who speak nicely and act like great friends or neighbours, but who hold malice in their hearts. Armies would be easier to deal with. Yet David prays. He is confident in the Lord's ability and willingness to help him – again. And sure enough, God comes through – again.

By verse 6 God has heard his prayer and answered him. It's the next verse though, that's powerful for us today. It says, "*The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped*". His heart trusts. Not his head, his heart. David's trust in God is not just intellectual. His heart actually believes God will protect him. God has spoken to his heart. Sometimes we have the head belief but we can't trust it with our hearts. This Psalm encourages us to continue praying for God to move our hearts to trust Him.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord to speak to you about a prayer request you have now. Are you truly prepared for God to answer your prayer, but not like you'd like? Is your heart ready to receive **any** answer from God, or are you only going to praise Him if the answer is what you want? Ask the Lord to reveal any hidden fears or struggles in regard to trusting God fully with this prayer request.
2. Journal any names God shows you of people who have hurt you in the past, or currently (or times when you have spoken nicely but had malice in your heart). Ask God to show you if you have forgiven or asked for forgiveness, and if not do that now.
3. Ask God to reveal your heart to you: Do you trust God with your heart enough that you can continue to give and be vulnerable in relationships? Ask Him to bring new depth of healing and even more trust to your heart.

DAY 13



READ: Psalms 29-30

The title of Psalm 29 could have been: Give God Glory. Glory is not a word our culture uses much outside of church. Some might even consider it part of the "Christianese" we sometimes speak. What exactly is glory? And how do we ascribe, or give it, to God?

Glory is fame, honour, recognition, majesty, power, reputation and position. Another way to define glory might be to say it is the essence and value of someone. Throughout Scripture, and this Psalm, we are told to give God glory. God already has the highest honor, and power, and position. How do we give Him what He already has?

As we read through Psalm 29 the Psalmist shows us exactly how to give God glory. Every phrase, every verse declares the majesty and power of God. It declares who He is, what He does, and how He does it. The essence and value and power of God are seen through these verses. The Psalmist is jogging our minds and challenging us to look around and see the very presence – the glory – of God in our environment and then to acknowledge it. It is this acknowledgement, actually speaking up, about what God has done and how He rules this earth, and is involved in our lives, that brings Him glory. We cannot change His glory, but we can give it to Him by communicating His glory to the world around us.

Psalm 30 is a song of thanksgiving. The Psalmist sings to God all He has done for Him. He is remembering what God has done for him and is thanking him again. Then, tucked away in verse 8 and 9 is another glimpse into the heart of David. So sure and confident was David that he would always give God glory and proclaim his faithfulness, we see him using that

to try to convince God to let him live longer! David is saying to God, What good would it do for me to die? If I died the dust of my body won't be able to praise you, so why not let me live so I can praise you and others will see your goodness?

We have seen David do this very thing through the last few weeks. David loves to proclaim the glory of God. It brings up a challenge for us. Are we so faithful to proclaim God's glory, faithfulness and goodness that God might extend our lives for His benefit?



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord if you have withheld glory from Him in any way. Is there something He wants you to do about that? Confess if necessary and ask God for specific ways, times and people you can share His glory with.
2. Spend several minutes in a prayer of thanksgiving to God for who He is and all that He does, has done and will do. Ask God to transform your heart through thanksgiving so you grow to be thankful not just for the 'good' things but also for the tough things.
3. Journal briefly what some of the many things are that God has done in your life that you can declare to others and share His glory. Then pray that God would prepare your heart to open your mouth and give Him glory. Ask God what needs to change in your heart and life so your very presence on earth would be even more beneficial to God and the spreading of His glory in this place.

DAY 14



READ: Psalms 31-33

Although these chapters may not have been written in any specific order, they do fall in a progression we can use for ourselves today.

In Psalm 31 we see the Psalmist, David, pour out his heart to the Lord, telling him how hard life is. He talks about being consumed, and being treated poorly. There are traps set for him all around, and he feels like there is a battle every which way he turns. We sometimes feel the same way. Yet, thrown into this conversation with God are declarations of his belief in God's goodness. His commitments to trusting God no matter what, and loving God with all his heart, keep him going in the hard times.

Psalm 32 is the testimony of David after having his sin forgiven. We know how heavy the burden of unconfessed sin is. It eats at us. It can make us physically sick. No area of our lives is untouched by unconfessed sin. When that sin is confessed, forgiven and dealt with our lives are transformed. This is the theme of Psalm 32 – the blessing of confession and forgiveness. David says his bones wasted away, he was weak and tired from his sin. However, once he confessed his sins to God he was a new man! As a matter of fact, he thinks *everyone* should do it! Verse 6 says "*therefore let everyone pray to you*". He goes on in verse 9 to indicate how foolish and stubborn the people are who don't go to God. No matter how many sins, or how great the sin is, God's unfailing love will surround the one who trusts in Him. God's forgiveness brings life.

From a Psalm of trouble, to a Psalm of forgiveness, we now go to a Psalm of joy and thanksgiving! The first few verses of this Psalm are instructive. 1) Sing. 2) Praise the Lord. 3) Make music. 4) Sing. 5) Play skillfully. Many of us turn on the radio when we get in the car. Sometimes we sing along, but more often than not our minds turn to what's bothering us or things we need to work out. We have iPods full of music, and access to all kinds of praise and worship songs. Yet, the truth is, even our Christian culture rarely makes a point to use music to worship on an individual level. We leave the music to the pastor at church, or the

choir, or a few songs we sing (if we actually sing) on Sunday morning. Yet these verses say to sing and make music! Sing some more and play your instrument with skill... that means practice! Practice hard so we can worship better! From verse 4 on the Psalmist gives us many reasons why the Lord is worthy to be praised. He ends with a commitment of waiting for the Lord and trusting in Him.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. When was the last time you poured out your heart to God? Take a few minutes now to write a letter to God in your journal, or to get on your knees by your bed or chair to pour out to God all that is going on, the emotions you are feeling, and what your concerns and fears are. When your heart has been emptied before the Lord spend a few minutes listening quietly to see what Jesus wants to say to you. Write down His words in your journal.
2. Ask the Lord to reveal any sin in your heart – either something you are aware of or has been hidden – for you to confess. Take time to confess this sin to the Lord and receive His forgiveness. Ask the Lord if there is anyone you need to confess that sin to, and if so, plan to do it as soon as possible. Say a prayer of thanks for all you have been forgiven of.
3. Sing a song of worship to God. If you are not comfortable singing without music, turn on your favourite worship song and sing along. If this is new and you are looking for some ideas to get started, you can easily find these songs online: *This is Amazing Grace* by Phil Wickham, *In Christ Alone* by Natalie Grant, *How Great Thou Art*.

Optional: *If music and singing is not something you are comfortable with, ask the Lord to give you an idea of how you can express your worship to Him today. Perhaps by serving someone, or working diligently on a project, or painting/drawing your worship to the Lord. Let the Lord guide you in how to express your deepest worship of Him.*

DAY 15



READ: Psalm 34-36

David wrote this Psalm just after he pretended to be insane to preserve his life (see 1 Samuel 21:10-15). David's life, it could be said, was one of living on the edge. He was going from danger to danger, risk to risk. For one risk he might engage in battle, in the next he might be diplomatic, and according to Scripture he even went so far as to act like a madman! David had no tried-and-true battle plans, or means of escape. His strategy was to rely on the Lord. No wonder his plans were a little off-the-wall! In Psalm 34 David gives credit to God for helping him. He says he boasts in the Lord. This is because the crazy ideas are not his – they come from God. God answered him, delivered him and saved him. David has no doubt whatsoever. He knows the Lord has protected him. He also knows it is because he pursues righteousness and fears the Lord. So he teaches his followers (verse 11) to live holy lives and fear the Lord. David understands there is, and will continue to be, trouble, disaster and discouragement. Yet he has the audacity to say the Lord won't allow even a bone to be broken. We will very likely see trouble and hurt here, but God will **not** allow this to define you for eternity. The deliverance God offers is not just for not, but forever!

Psalm 36 offers us an opportunity to evaluate our own hearts. The first few verses describe the wicked. It is natural to ask, "How do I compare?" David's first comment is there is no fear of God in the heart of the wicked. This should cause us to pull back, evaluate, and ask if we fear the Lord. The next thing David says is they think so highly of themselves they

don't even see their own sin. How many times are we caught in this trap, thinking our sin is not nearly as big as someone else's? "*At least I haven't...*" We fill in the blank with a sin someone else has committed thereby excusing ourselves of our own sin. We don't hate our sin. We get comfortable with it, make friends with it, and don't even notice it is the very thing that's killing us. When David goes on to explain what this sin looks like it's not murder, or adultery, or any of the "big" sins. It's in what he says, unwise choices, and planning sinful behavior. It's the heart! Yet God offers us His faithful forgiveness, time after time after time. God looks for the heart that is upright, not just the actions.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord to reveal to you anything that has happened to you, or you have done, that is defining you today. Ask the Lord to show you how this will change in eternity if you stay committed to Him. Ask the Lord if there is something He wants to say to you today to change whether or not this continues to define you even now.
2. Ask Jesus to reveal to you if there is a sin in your life you have excused by comparing it to someone else's sin. Ask God why you don't hate that sin. Confess it to Him and ask Him to give you His perspective on your sin so that you might have a righteous heart.
3. Ask God for a very specific picture of His love toward you that will motivate you to love others today with a love that is pure, faithful and unending. Keep this image in mind throughout today.

DAY 16



READ: Psalm 37-38

Psalm 37 begins with a stark instruction: don't be jealous of wicked people because they are going to die anyway. The rest of the chapter explains in many different ways how to live so we won't be counted among the wicked. David has seen many wicked people fall into obscurity, gone with nothing left to mark their lives. Yet David is full of hope for those who love God and trust Him. There are so many benefits – even when faced with danger, disaster and death.

The Lord's protection and provision are sure. However, justice plays a strong role. It's not just about waiting out the pain, but understanding God will most definitely make it all right one day. He will pay the wicked what they deserve and the righteous will be preserved forever. Two verses that stand out are 37-38. Verse 37b says, "*there is a future for the man of peace.*" This future is both on earth and in heaven. Interesting to note is how David is speaking about **all** the blameless and **all** the sinners. We need to remember this. Too many times we look at chapters like this, shake our fists at heaven and ask, "*Why am I going through the very same things some non-Christians are?*" These two verses give us the answer.

Our perspective needs to be on our eternal future. That's where the difference is made clear and concise. The fullness of the promises will be witnessed in eternity, and that's the very reason we need to live according to verse 5. The truth is this: When we commit our way to God and trust in Him our eternities will be changed from death to life!

So many of us struggle with health issues. Often we run to doctors or health professionals for answers and diagnoses. Although there is absolutely nothing wrong with going to a doctor for help, David reminds us in Psalm 38 that sometimes our health issues are directly from the hand of God. He can choose many ways to discipline us. David experienced God's discipline in the form of health problems. Some of David's issues were open and festering

wounds, searing back pain, feeling sick to his stomach, deep depression, racing heart, and overall weakness. It even sounds like he has a foggy brain and is having trouble thinking and communicating clearly. Some of us may feel like he's writing our medical history!

David's not at all surprised at the health struggles he's facing. He knows he sinned. He knows God loves him. And because of that, he fully expects God to discipline him. What is his cure? To cry out to the Lord and confess his sin. Not all health issues are evidence of God's discipline or wrath. However, what might change in our health and bodies if we asked God first about hidden sin, or sinful lifestyles and attitudes, listening carefully and obeying before going to the doctor for help?



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord to remind you or reveal to you any times you may have been jealous of others who seem to prosper even though – or because – they were wicked. Then ask Him to give you a long list of things He has done specifically just for you. Keep adding to that list by asking Him to remind you of what He has promised for you in heaven. Pray a prayer of confession for being envious of the wicked. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for a life of blessing both now and in the promise of all eternity.
2. Pray Psalm 37:5 by first praying a prayer of commitment to the Lord. Then ask Him to fill you with reminders of His faithfulness so your trust in Him can grow and grow.
3. If you are struggling with any health issue, big or small, ask the Lord if your health issue is a consequence of a sin or a discipline from Him. If it is, confess your sin to Him, then ask Him if there are any steps you need to take to follow Him into health before you see your doctor again. Make a commitment to obey Him. If you do not sense the Lord is disciplining you, thank Him for the doctors we have available to us and ask Him to give you spiritual eyes and ears to recognize His discipline if and when it comes.

DAY 17



READ: Psalm 39-41

The average Canadian will live 80 years, or 29,200 days. A 20 year old today may have about 22,000 days left. Someone close to 40 is looking at only 14,600 days. Those in their 60's may have less than 7,300 days left on this earth. Not all of us will live to be 80. For some the number of days left is very, very small. Only the Lord knows the number of days we have. Yet David teaches us to ask God to help us see the end and to consider how short our lives are in light of eternity.

David makes a very pointed statement in verse 6 of Psalm 39. We are rushing, busy, stressed, worried and everlastingly tired... for what? We hustle and bustle to make this incredibly short life better, gaining wealth and material goods and prestige. In verse 7, though, David asks God, *What's my goal in life now that I know this life is so short?* Immediately we get the answer: to make things right with God; to have our sins forgiven.

Psalm 40 is a Psalm of praise from the pits when nothing is going right. David talks about a slimy pit, mud and mire, troubles without number, many sins, poverty and enemies who try to do their worst. Yet he praises God and begs for His love, truth and mercy. He focuses his mind on the truth of God's many blessings. He remembers God is so much bigger than even the worst of our troubles combined. This is why David can sing in verse 5 that God's wonder are uncountable! What a testimony that is – especially from the pits! This is David's example to us, and why he can boldly praise the Lord in verse 16. David's prayer in this Psalm is that we would declare the greatness of God, and see His goodness all the time. Even when it doesn't seem good, we are challenged to search and find it.

Psalm 41 is sung by David out of a heart full of pain and grief. It's bad enough to have enemies but David's friend betrayed him. David confidently prays for his enemies and his friend to receive the justice they deserve. He prays confidently because he *knows* God is pleased with him. How does he know that?! No still small voice told him! Neither the wind nor the quiet. Not into his ears or through the voice of godly counsel. David says he knew God was pleased with him because He had preserved his life from the enemy. When we are faced with impossible situations and God breaks through miraculously not only do we know God *did* it. We can also know this: God did it for *us*. No wonder he sings praise to the Lord from everlasting to everlasting! Wouldn't you?



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. How many days do you have left until you reach heaven (or you are blessed with death)? ($80 - \text{your age} = X$. Take X and multiply by 365. This will give you a rough idea.) Ask the Lord to speak to you about how you are spending your time. Are you investing your time, energy and money into eternal things or are you too focused on gaining wealth or prestige? Are you preparing yourself for heaven or busying yourself with earth? If the Lord shows you anything that might need changing, thank Him for showing you now, while there is still time!
2. Consider a struggle you are in right now. Ask God to show you 3-5 things you can be thankful for even in the midst of a painful situation. Pray your thanks to Him!
3. What are some ways God has spoken to you? Ask God to show you where in the past He has spoken to you but you didn't notice because it seemed "normal". Thank Him for speaking to you, then ask Him to tell you 2-3 things about you that He is very pleased with. Write them down and say thank you!

BOOK II: Psalms 42-41

DAY 18



READ: Psalms 42-72

Psalm 42 is one many can relate to. The writer is thirsty and hungry for God. He compares his thirst to that of a deer panting for water. An interesting thing about deer is that they don't drink from a stream until there is no threat to them and they feel entirely safe. It seems the Psalmist is longing not just for refreshment from God, but also safety and rest. He asks, *"When can I go to meet with God?"* He talks about his tears being his food day and night, and he just wants to get away from it all. He wants to stop running and be in a place with God to receive respite from the stresses and pain of life.

The Psalmist is heavy-hearted and wrestling with difficulties. Yet he says 'deep calls to deep'. What exactly does this mean? If we could travel to the depths of the ocean there would be a sense of quiet, calm and stability. Even if the surface of the water would be roiling with tumultuous waves the depth of the ocean would not be affected. 'The deep' is that same place in our souls. Sometimes God doesn't speak to our circumstances or concerns. Rather, He calls out from the depth of Himself to the depth of who we are and our identity. Some of us hear or sense this in prayer, others in worship, and many of us when we are walking through our most traumatic days. God becomes our Rock, our stability, and even though we can't necessarily pinpoint it, we know that the depth of our soul has been held, carried, and changed by the heart of God.

Psalm 42 and 43 almost seem like two parts of the same psalm. Psalm 42:5, 11 and Psalm

43: 5 are identical. As he struggles with his depression and discouragement, being worn out and weary, he realizes this struggle is not getting any better. So he reminds himself of truth, not once, not twice but three times in these two chapters.

This is a solid model for us to follow. When we are sinking into a pit of depression and darkness one very solid practice we can take from this passage is that of speaking truth to our own hearts and minds. As we can see in these two Psalms, we can't just do it once. We need to remind ourselves over and over of these four things:

1. We need to deliberately put our hope in God.
2. We must remember there will come a time when we will eagerly praise God again.
3. We must recognize that although we may need help and resources to get us through the tough times, God alone is our Savior.
4. Finally, we must declare our decision to choose Him as our God.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. When you think about your devotional times, do they seem like a safe stream of water, a place and time where you can receive refreshment, refuge and nourishment from the Lord? If so, thank the Lord for the ways and times He has done this for you. If not, ask Him what needs to change in order to sense His safety and provision for you. Ask God for the courage to obey what He asks.
2. Write down a time when you sensed God was carrying you, or when you could feel His presence very strongly. Take 5 minutes right now to ask the Lord to reveal Himself to your soul and to remove the distraction of your circumstances so your mind can be fully engaged with His presence and His Word. If possible, go to a quiet room where you can wait for Him on your knees. While you pray, bring to the Lord someone who is going through a time of turbulence. Ask God to share with them this sense of His presence, of deep calling to deep.
3. Ask the Lord if there is a truth you need to be speaking to your own heart today, maybe in response to depression, a hurt, a lie you believe, or simply about who God is. Write down what He says. Pray a prayer of commitment to speak that truth and believe it all day long.

DAY 19



READ: Psalms 44-45

Psalm 44 is set into three distinct sections. It starts with a reminiscing section in verses 1 through 8. It is a recounting of the magnificent works of God. During this testimony we see the writers giving all the credit to God. If something good happened, God was credited. The Psalmists are saying: *Look and see how great our God is!*

The second section begins in verse 9 and goes through verse 16. This section is also a testimony. This testimony, however, is not a recounting of magnificent deeds but rather a reminder of the struggle they've suffered. Just like God got credit for the good things He did, He is also getting credit for the hard things they experienced.

The final section clarifies for us why they are suffering: simply because God allowed it. It wasn't punishment or consequence. The Psalmist could experience such difficulty and still worship God, though. He says in verse 20 that if they had worshiped or prayed to other gods for help God would have known – even if they had done it in secret. Because God knows the secrets of their hearts (and of our hearts) they knew they would be found out. It is one thing to suffer for dishonouring God. It is quite another to suffer because somehow

it is in God's sovereign plan and we will be rewarded for our faithfulness in the midst of suffering. The testimony of God's goodness helps carry us through the hard times we don't understand.

Psalm 45 is a wedding song. Let's look specifically at verse 20. This is a message to the bride, who likely was from a Gentile background and not of Jewish heritage. If we read this from the perspective of the Bride of Christ we can see a strong calling to purity within the Church. With the Church in mind, there are two specific things we can take to heart.

The first is the instruction to forget our father's house. Our lineage of sin comes through the first Adam. As we align ourselves with Christ and are married into the Bride we leave our 'father's house'. We are told to forget him. We live according to new family rules now. The marriage union one day between Christ and the Church, gives us a new family to belong to.

The second is the understanding that Christ is enthralled with His Bride just like this groom is enthralled with his bride. What a joy it will be for Christ to return to His beautiful Bride! A bride of purity and holiness. He longs to return to a bride who honours Him. As we read the description of the bride in verses 13-15 we get a glimpse of the glory of that upcoming wedding. What a day that will be!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. What is your testimony of God's goodness? Take a few minutes to ask God to bring to light some of the great things He has done in your life. Take time to thank God for those things. Consider who to share your testimony with today.
2. As we prepare for the coming of Christ, we need to separate more and more from this world and be connected to the things of Christ. Ask Jesus if there is something you are holding onto from your sinful nature He's asking you to let go, forget, and walk away from. Is there anything you need to confess? Patterns or habits that need to change? Confess to the Lord and thank Him for grace to live according to His standards.
3. The way the Bride of Christ clothes herself is with holiness, purity and honour to the King. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if there is something you can add to your life (in attitude or action) that would bring honour to His name. Write it down and make a commitment in prayer to follow through.

DAY 20



READ: Psalms 46-48

Psalm 46 is a psalm of encouraging us as we hurtle toward the last days. This psalm gives clear explanation of where our safety and hope will be in those days when everything around us is falling apart. We will not fear – no matter what. We see the stability of heaven in verses 4 – 5 in stark contrast to the instability of the nations of the earth. God has it all in His hand. A mere word from Him and the earth would melt. We can have confidence in God to be our refuge and to mete out justice. Verses 8 – 9 are an invitation for us to get a sneak peek into how God will handle justice in the end. It will not be a pretty sight. In the middle of it he extends yet another invitation: *Be still and know that I am God*. In the midst of the mayhem, we can step into His presence and know Him. Such great hope we have!

Psalm 47 is a song of praise! When God has done so much for us we can't help but give Him praise! This psalm commands us to praise God in song. Often in our quiet times we forget how significant singing is to our souls, and how important it is to God. Even in corporate worship, which is likely the setting for this psalm, singing is not just 'part of the

service' but an outward expression of the gratitude experienced in our hearts.

Psalm 48 is another song of corporate praise. Two of the most compelling verses in this psalm are verses 12 – 13. They remind us to check out, measure, take notes on, and fully comprehend Zion. What is Zion? Zion is the city that God has reserved for Himself. Zion is a symbol of God's great strength, care and attention to detail. The reason we are given is so we can tell the next generation. This process of telling the next generation is critical for our churches and our families today. It is imperative we talk about, measure, take notes on, and fully comprehend what God is doing today in our lives. What is He doing? What has He done? We need to know the details – down to the measurements and amounts – so we can pass the God-stories on to our children, so they can see God's faithfulness for themselves.

Without the details of the stories of God we have to share with the next generation, they will not have confidence in Him when their going gets tough. They also have a journey to walk, and our prayer is they walk it in faith and obedience, trusting God Almighty. They need to know these things so they can sing verse 13 together with us.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Many of us don't like to think about, study or talk about the last days or even persecution. We are filled with fear. Ask the Lord to speak to you with a word, thought, picture or song, about His ability to be your refuge when times get tough. Journal this and refer back to it over the next few days as the Holy Spirit roots this deep into your heart.
2. Corporate worship is something God really, really loves! Ask God to speak to you about what He feels, thinks, or wants from your worship of Him. Does it melt His heart? Is He thrilled with it? Does He want more from you? Listen to His heart, write it down and the next time you are worshipping corporately, make a note (perhaps set a silent or visual alarm on your phone or iPod?) to worship in such a way that God's heart will swell with pride.
3. Do you ever get tired of hearing someone recite the good things God has done, especially if they seem excited about the details? Confess this to God, and ask Him for a heart that longs to hear about the good things He has done. Ask the Lord to remind you of something He has done that He wants passed down to the next generation of believers. Write it down and make a commitment to share God's glory!

DAY 21

 **READ:** Psalms 49-51

Psalm 49 is one of the "wisdom" psalms. As a culture, we have fallen into the very traps this psalm speaks about. Although it seems like it was written for North American believers, the first two verses break that theory by calling everyone to listen and pay attention, whether they are rich, or poor, important or not.

An interesting definition appears in verses 5-6. The evildoers, or the wicked, are those who trust in their wealth. This should cause us alarm and concern. When we struggle with having little, it is easy to believe everything would get better with just a bit more money. That amount is always out of reach. When we have much, our struggle is to experience our need for God.

The harsh reality is this: all of us will die, whether rich or poor. Businesses, property, estates, bank accounts and retirement funds may in fact last longer than the people who began them. If all we are gathering together is what we can touch, feel and count, our life

and legacy will disappear when we die. Yet God offers to redeem us, and our legacy. This hope is sure! Verse 17 reminds us when God redeems us our life does not end when we die! It is not our wealth, nor our poverty, that saves us, but the redemption God offers.

Verses 7-9 speak about this redemption. No one can redeem the life of anyone else because the ransom for a life is too costly – especially to be redeemed into eternal life. This is out of reach even for the wealthiest person on earth. Yet this is our gift! We can have this redemption because the one who could save us has. He has paid that costly ransom price!

The final few verses again remind us of how wealth works. It attracts much attention here on this earth. We count ourselves blessed. Those who have money are high and lofty, the coveted ones. But are we really blessed? Is it a blessing when it cannot be carried into eternity? We cannot take our wealth with us when we die.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. A *spirit of poverty* is one that often causes us to feel poor, whether we really are or not. Even a wealthy person can have a spirit of poverty. It can be what drives a person to rely on and gain wealth. This psalm makes it clear we cannot trust in wealth. A *spirit of wealth*, on the other hand, is one that can cause us to demand blessing or prosperity. It can cause us to trust in our possessions or abilities rather than God. Or it can cause us to demand things of God and limit our submission to Him based on our perceived blessing. Ask the Lord if you have either, or both, or none of these. Let Him speak openly and honest with you about this. Ask Him plainly: Jesus, do I fully trust you to provide for me everything I need? How much do I truly believe that you are all I need today and ever? Let the Lord speak to you about this. If you sense a spirit of poverty or wealth that is burdensome, or has been passed on to you through generational bondage, consider making a personal ministry appointment.
2. Verse 18 talks about how people treat wealthy people differently and praise them when they prosper. The opposite is also true. We often treat people as less-than when they are poor or experience financial difficulty. Ask the Lord to bring to mind a wealthy person you have honored (perhaps even secretly) because of their wealth, and someone you have treated poorly (perhaps secretly) because of their poverty. Ask God to speak to you about their true value. Confess any sin and ask Him for a step of obedience to demonstrate biblical honor that is not based on wealth.
3. Since we cannot take our wealth with us when we die, what does the Lord want you to be investing in today (your time, energy, money) so that a genuine legacy will last into eternity? Listen carefully to His answer and ask Him to give you the next step in accomplishing that task.

DAY 22

 **READ:** Psalm 50-51

These two psalms make a beautiful set of songs describing and explaining sacrifices God finds acceptable. Psalm 50 begins with a powerful description of God. Here we see raw power, fierce glory and strong justice in the very being of God Almighty.

God speaks to the people about their sacrifices. He says he has no problems with what they are sacrificing but He wants to remind them of something very, very important: they are not sacrificing animals so He can have them. No. That's how we sacrifice for people: We give up what we have so others can have. But God says He doesn't need anything we have to offer because He already owns it all. Our sacrifices should be about the attitude He desires to see in each of us.

God wants to see our hearts sacrificed to Him. One thing He doesn't take for Himself, but waits for us to offer Him, is our hearts. Verse 14 says He wants us to sacrifice thanksgiving to Him. God makes it very clear. Thankfulness is of utmost importance to Him.

As we continue in the chapter we see there is a lot God says to the wicked we can learn from as well. We can see from these verses how important it is to God that we accept His discipline, treat God's voice with great value, stand against immoral behavior, guard our tongues and speak truth.

Sometimes we believe God is not punishing sin today like He did in Bible Times. We read of people who were killed for lying, or were swallowed up by the earth, or somehow immediately punished for sin. Perhaps we have begun to believe God no longer punishes sin the same way, so we think we'll get off easy. Verse 21 reminds us though, even if God is silent, His holiness will still exact an account and a price for our sin.

Verse 23 says God loves a heart full of thanks toward Him. This is the sacrifice He loves. We don't need an altar, or a herd of bulls and goats and sheep. All we need is to have a heart that offers thanks!

Psalm 51 grows this idea of sacrifice a little deeper. The psalm begins with a prayer of confession and repentance, which is a solid example of what someone with a broken spirit might do. God is specifically looking for people like this. They see the sin inside and recognize what they have been saved from, realize that without God condemnation is the only option. When we have a broken spirit we desperately long for forgiveness and restoration, and eagerly walk in repentance because we know firsthand the pain of our sinful nature.

This is what God is looking for: hearts that are fully devoted to Him in confession, repentance and thankfulness.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord if you have been consistently offering Him sacrifices of Thanksgiving. Confess any sin of withholding thanks. Spend 5-10 minutes writing down all the things – both good and difficult – you can be thankful for. Then pray a prayer of thanks from the depths of your heart. (Optional: Pray out loud standing up with hands raised in worship, or kneeling in humble submission.)
2. Ask God how you are doing in these areas, then confess sin if necessary, and thank Him for helping you in the areas you are doing well.
 - a. Accepting His discipline
 - b. Treating God's voice with great value
 - c. Standing against immoral behavior
 - d. Guarding your tongue
 - e. Speaking truth.
3. Ask God if you have been taking your sin lightly, excusing it, or indulging in it because you don't see an immediate punishment. Ask Him to show you specific areas or sins where this may be a tendency. Confess if necessary. Pray a prayer of commitment to remember God's holiness and ask Him to convict you quickly of sin so you can confess and repent.

DAY 23



READ: Psalms 52-54

Psalm 52 is a little bit different than many of the other psalms. Many psalms sing about how the wicked rise up at scoff at the righteous, and how the righteous feel like they are getting trampled on. We see David with almost a mocking tone say to the evildoers that their strength and wealth will not last because they do not honor God. He talks about the things God will do to bring them to justice. Verse 6 says the righteous will see and fear what God is doing. This is key! The righteous see God's power and fear it, knowing He could pour His wrath on them as well. The wicked see God's power and fight it, believing somehow they can stand against Him. The final two verses of this psalm are a personal declaration of faith and praise. David has seen the blessing of following God – even while being pursued relentlessly by enemies. He has benefited from being righteous. He can stand on the unfailing love and goodness of God. He has seen firsthand how God has handled the wicked. It is no wonder then, this testimony of praise would come from his heart.

Psalm 53:1 is a well-known verse. To say there is no God is the epitome of foolishness. How does this apply to us who say we are believers? When we continue to act and live as if there is no God, we live foolishly. Giving God room in our lives to speak and living as if He exists, makes a difference, affects our eternity, and ensures we live and die differently than the fool.

Verses 2-3 in Psalm 53 are somewhat sobering, yet hopeful. God is looking on this earth for men and women who love Him and are devoted to Him. He is looking for people who seek Him. Yet the news isn't good: everyone has turned away. Everyone does evil. It even says "not even one". This is sobering because it sounds like the days of Noah when God saw just one person He could entrust with Creation. Yet it causes us to ask, what about our culture? What about our country? Would God find even one here?

These verses are hopeful in the sense that although there doesn't seem to be anyone choosing to seek God, this is not the first time this has happened. Every time we see this happen throughout Scripture, we also see God rise up to save His people. God *longs* for relationship with people so He goes to great lengths to make it happen. When we compare this to our culture we can have hope in the Lord because He wants to find someone seeking Him. It also leads us to ask very personally, *If God is looking on the earth today for a faithful person who seeks Him... will He see me?*



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Spend a few minutes writing out some of the big and small miracles God has done for you, even if you didn't recognize the miracle when it happened. (For example: protecting me when I slipped on the ice, giving me a spouse, healing me, taking away cravings for nicotine, etc) Then spend some time personalizing the prayer in Psalm 52:8-9. Pray this for yourself, and keep it handy to pray through the week.
2. Ask the Lord if there is a part of your life where you are living as a fool because you are either denying God access to that part, or you don't believe He can really make a difference (He's not really God... enough). Listen carefully to what He says, confess if necessary. Ask Him to break through and show you even more concretely that He is God.
3. If God would searching the earth for a soul seeking Him... would He notice you? What exactly would He see? Ask God to speak to you about what He sees when He looks at your life. Is He pleased? Are you seeking Him? Pray a prayer of commitment to faithfully seek Him even in difficult situations.

DAY 24 **READ:** Psalms 55-56

Psalm 55 is another psalm of David. Again we read of David being pursued. His emotions are passionate and deep. The suffering he is enduring is most definitely overwhelming him. Most of us are not able to relate to having people hunt us down, or whole nations and cities being against us. Yet this is David's situation – and not even for the first time! He says in verses 6-8 he wishes he had wings so he could just fly away from it all. That is something more of us have experienced. David is longing for a break, for rest and reprieve from the constant running, hiding and not being sure whom he can trust.

In verses 12-14 we learn it's worse than just enemies pursuing him. It's a close friend. This brings him down more than all the enemies combined. We can see how David's trust in others has been eroded. Instead of taking the wounding and betrayal of someone who should have loved him, and deciding then to trust no one at all, though, David gives us another testimony.

Starting in verse 16 David proclaims loudly how God is faithful. He **knows** God hears his voice no matter when he calls. In verses 20-23 David contrasts his friend's betrayal to God's steady sustaining power. In the midst of all this turmoil, it might make sense to us for David to have his trust in God waver. But David is rock solid. No matter what happens to him, his faith and trust is solidly placed in God.

Psalm 56 is one of both pleading prayer and declaration. David goes back and forth between pleading with God for help, crying out about the enemies who pursue him and then firmly declaring his trust and confidence in God. It almost seems as if David is making a very determined effort to remind himself, in the midst of the stress, that God will not abandon him and he will not abandon God. He is making the **choice** to trust in God and believe His Word. It's evidently not based on his emotion, but as we see in verse 12, it is his **vow** to God to keep trusting in Him and to bring Him sacrifices of thanksgiving. We've seen David practice this before in previous psalms. He is crying out to God from the depths of his pain, but at the same time not allowing his heart or mind to believe anything other than the truth he knows: God is trustworthy, faithful, my deliverer, and my hope.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Have you ever felt like running away from it all (or flying away like David did)? Journal about a time you wanted to run away from all the stress in your life. Ask the Lord to speak to you about how He sustained you in that difficult time. If you are in that time this very moment, ask God to make Psalm 55:22 very, real to you with words, thoughts, pictures or a song. Thank Him for His faithfulness, even if like David, it's more of a declaration right now than an experience.
2. Have you ever been betrayed or mistreated by someone close to you who should have been on your side? Ask the Lord if there is any lingering effect from this broken relationship that causes you to trust Him less. Confess any sin of unforgiveness toward that person if there is any. Ask Him for healing in this area, and then a word, thought, picture or song to confirm this for you. Pray a prayer of declaration of your trust in Him even if this has not been an issue for you.
3. Ask God to bring to mind a time when your emotions have not lined up with your belief or commitment to trust in the Lord. Ask Him to speak to you about your commitment to Him (perhaps your prayer of salvation, your covenant of baptism, your commitment to membership or ministry, etc) and whether or not you have kept that commitment even if you haven't seen or felt the benefit, like David in Psalm 56. Ask

God to give you 3-5 reminders now of how He has been faithful to you in hard times, then pray a prayer declaring your commitment to trust Him. Consider writing these reminders or your prayer of declaration on a 3x5 card or framing them on your wall to keep these truths ever before you.

DAY 25 **READ:** Psalms 57-59

These three psalms were written by David when he was on the run from Saul. Interestingly, each psalm has a heading informing the reader these songs can all be sung to the same tune. It appears everyone would have known the song "Do Not Destroy".

Psalm 57 is a song of praise. In it David recounts how he called out to God for mercy and safety and God came through. He explains he is in the midst of danger, yet chooses to praise God. In verse 6 he tells how his enemies were caught in their own snare. Because he is exalting God, we can see he gives God full credit for not only his safety but also the punishment of the wicked.

David has a clear and concrete understanding of God's faithfulness and love. He is moved to song. David wants to sing and make music – and he is still in the midst of danger. He fully trusts God to save him from his enemies and to make him king.

Psalm 58 is one many might not enjoy reading. The words and content grate harshly against our North American political correctness. David is begging God to do terrible things to the wicked: to break their teeth, to make them vanish, to sweep them away and basically get rid of all the wicked. How can this be? Is David singing to the same God of love we serve today? It's not hard to think what might happen in today's news if we sang a song similar to this in our churches today! It seems so harsh and cruel to have a man after God's own heart sing a song asking God to exact such awful punishment.

Yet in verse 10-11 we see this is fully within the scope of a God of Love. God loves the righteous passionately. He takes it very personally when one of His precious children are hurt or taken advantage of. He has promised to take revenge on our behalf – to be our Vindicator. So as David sings he is not singing just of the people who are on his case that day. He is actually singing for every single righteous person to ever live. He is singing out his encouragement, "Keep going! Don't mind the pain right now because God is going to make it right in the end. These wicked people will be judged!" This chapter, although it may seem foreign to us, is actually one of hope and encouragement.

In Psalm 59 we encounter a very interesting verse. Verse 11a says, "*Don't kill them, for my people soon forget such lessons*". On one hand David is crying out for help and deliverance, yet here we see something different. David is actually asking God **not** to eliminate the enemy because it would be too easy to forget their need for God.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Has God given you a promise, or called you to something that hasn't yet happened? Do you ever feel like David who was anointed king but spent the next many, many years running for his life like a fugitive? David shows us how to live in the in-between. Ask the Lord to review with you the promise or calling He gave you that hasn't yet materialized. Then ask Him to give you an enduring promise and sense of His glory and goodness that will carry you through the toughest days of your life. Journal what He tells you.

2. In the end of time God will judge all people – and it won't be pretty. Our culture doesn't like to think of The Judgment and the horrors of it. Ask the Lord to give you a clear understanding of how His justice is perfect, and how He will never, ever give anyone a punishment they don't deserve. Write down what He tells you. Now ask Him to speak to you with a word, thought, picture or song regarding the blessing He has planned for those who follow Him.
3. Is there a difficult situation or person that is just not going away no matter how much you pray? Ask God if this problem is supposed to stay there to help remind you to lean on Him. If yes, give Him praise! If not, Ask God to show you which situations in your life have proven to be the ones that created the most growth. Spend time thanking Him for giving you opportunity to grow strong in Him.

DAY 26**READ:** Psalms 60-62

As David was writing this psalms, other nations were gathering together as allies against him. Friendly nations were allying with enemy nations and David was standing alone with no allies to come to his aid. With nations aligned against him David cried out to God for victory. He felt rejected by God because of all the desperate times, yet he knew his only hope was in the Lord. While other nations were making agreements to fight against David, David was singing to the Lord about his trust in God to give him aid, because the help of men is worthless. It was David's firm belief and confidence that unless God brings the victory there will be none – no matter how badly stacked the odds are. His best and only ally was God Himself.

Psalm 61 is a call to God from a man who is growing weak and possibly depressed. He teaches us a very important lesson about how to endure when life is overwhelming and we are slipping into a low emotional place. David says this is when he calls to God and asks Him to take him higher to a place where he can't go on his own. Then he recalls the facts of God's faithfulness in the past, first to give God praise, and second to remind himself there really is hope in the Lord. David puts his focus on things the Lord has done and on eternity. His looking back (remembering things God has done, and his family heritage of faith) helps him to look forward (to living in heaven with God forever).

In verse 9 of Psalm 62 David's words are directed to the heart of one who is greedy and compares himself to others. He talks about upper class and lower class people. He explains how the lives of the lower class people are so short they are like a breath that disappears quickly. The upper class people don't actually exist. Some translations say they are a lie. This is because their lives don't last any longer or offer more value to the world than lower class people. This is why he then gives instructions not to extort money, or steal: it's not actually going to change our value. He says even if we do get wealthy, our hope should not be in our finances or our material possession because all our belongings and financial net worth does not change a single thing about our value as people. But before we get discouraged about having so little value, David reminds us in verse 12 how much God loves us. Even though our lives are as short as a breath, God promises to reward each individual person for what he has done. Our vapor-like lives still hold God's full attention. This makes His love for us even more incredible.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask God to show you if there is any situation or circumstance in your life where you are relying on the strength of friends, family, a boss, a co-worker, the government or anyone else, to help you instead of Him – especially if it feels like you will not get what you want or need without some sort of human intervention. It could be in connection to your finances, a relationship, making a purchase, getting a job – anything – big or small. If God brings something to mind, confess if necessary, and ask God to give you a clear understanding of His ability to help you. Ask God for what steps you should take in order to walk out the truth that He is your only hope.
2. Have you ever been discouraged or at an emotionally low point? Take a few minutes to follow David's pattern. Write out a list of things you know God has done for you. Then take a few more minutes and write out some of the great things you are looking forward to in heaven you will never experience here on earth. Spend time praising God for His faithfulness in times past and His hope for all eternity.
3. Ask God to examine your heart and expose to you if there is anything in your heart that believes those with wealth have more weight with God, that those with less have less importance, or regarding your own pursuit of status. Ask God for a clear word, thought or picture about the value of the rich and poor. Confess any sin if necessary. Ask God if there is any action He wants you to take to help this truth sink in.

DAY 27**READ:** Psalms 63-65

David is a man who communicates very clearly with God about his feelings, and his struggles. Psalm 63 is another one of these deeply felt prayers to the Lord. He is so aware of his need for God he feels it physically in his body. He describes his longing for God's refreshing as if he was drying out in a desert with no water, dying. Even so, he knows God is good, and his love is better than life. With the depth of longing he has for God, and even in the desperate situations he is in, he doesn't blame God for the struggles. Rather, he uses each struggle as a resource to help him remember the goodness of God. He has experienced God's goodness. He has known the love of God personally and longs for that experience again. Instead of allowing his dry desert experience to dictate the way he relates to God, he pushes into God even more. David lies on his bed at night purposely thinking about the things of God instead of dwelling on his circumstances. He chooses to sing as a way to cling to God, even when his emotions are screaming all kinds of opposites at him. This practice of praise and thanksgiving, of clinging desperately to God, give birth, to the hope that can only be found in God.

Psalm 65 is a song of praise. We don't know when this psalm was written. We can't know the exact situation David was in while he was composing this, but we know he is looking at the world around him, seeing the nature God created, and being stirred to the core with God's eternal goodness.

One could imagine David, no longer glum or in the depths of despair, seeing the world again as through new eyes. He begins by remembering how overwhelmed he's been by sin and the joy of God's forgiveness. Now the hope for an eternity with God filters into his soul. It's like spring has come to his heart and he is excited again to live. As we read through this psalm we sense that everything David sees is one more thing to give God glory for. He is ecstatic because of the goodness of God and he wants to give God praise in return for all His provision and bounty.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. David had powerful experiences of God's love and presence that helped him through difficult times. Ask the Lord right now to speak to you about His love for you. Lay down your agenda for today and ask the Lord to communicate with you in such a mighty way you would be able to look back on what He says to you today when you are in despair. Write down what He shows or tells you. Accept His love and His words. Enjoy His presence.
2. David lies on his bed at night thinking about the things of God instead of worrying or thinking through the day's struggles, worries or allowing his thoughts to lead him into despair. This lines up with 2 Corinthians 10:5 which tells us to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ. Ask the Lord to bring to mind times you typically let your mind wander or dwell on offences, fights, conversations, or other things that bring you down and don't glorify the Lord. Ask Him for forgiveness, then ask Him for several specific things He wants you to focus on the next time this comes up. Be diligent in practicing this!
3. Psalm 65 is a song of praise. If you are comfortable with it, either stand in respect or kneel in worship, and read this psalm to God out loud as your prayer of praise and thanksgiving. When the psalm is done, continue to praise God with things He brings to mind – even the practical every day things He has done for you.

DAY 28**READ:** Psalms 66-67

Psalms 66 and 67 are both psalms of praise. We don't know who authored them, but we do know they were songs to be sung corporately. Psalm 66 is one of testimony and teaching. God's people have used songs like this through generations to pass on the stories of God's mighty works to the next generation. There is nothing in the passage to indicate how this song might be sung, however, the words would indicate a passionate, rousing song of praise. This is no dirge!

The invitation of this song is found in verse 5 and 16. *"Come and see what God has done!"* The Psalmist wants everyone to know of God's great and mighty works. He wants others to praise God with him. There is a sense of burning urgency in the author, like someone who has found a treasure and cannot keep it to himself. His testimony of God's greatness is welling up in his heart and he wants to brag about His God. O, come and see!

This praise is possible not just because God did such amazing things but because he is forgiven. He says if he had cherished sin in his heart God wouldn't have listened to his prayers, and so much of his reason for praise would not have happened. When we confess our sin and allow God to expose what's hidden, God freely forgives, listens to our prayers and doesn't withhold His love from us. If ever there was a reason to sing – that would be it!

Psalm 67 is a prayer of blessing. The first verse is a blessing we can say over others and ourselves. This blessing invites God's pleasure over those we are praying for. Verse two begins a blessing we offer to God. When we understand God's heart we know He longs for the hearts of people. The words in this blessing must thrill God's heart! He wants to see the nations be glad and joyful in His presence. This is the ultimate desire of God, to have all His creation praise Him.

In the last verse we see again the relationship between God and His people. This psalm expresses the relationship we have with Him. When we draw near to God and praise Him, in relationship with Him, He will in turn bless us. This personal relationship such a powerful

God has with His subjects, His creation, is both tender and terrible. For if God loves those people so much, He will guard and protect them. This is what causes fear in those who do not know Him.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask the Lord to give you a list of mighty things He has done in your life. Then ask Him to give you a passion to share your testimony with others. Take 5-10 minutes to prepare a testimony of something God has done in your life recently. Ask Him who He wants you to share it with. You might send it by email, make a phone call to say, 'Guess what God did for me', or mention it casually at school or work. Practice over the next 5-7 days sharing the wonderful things God is doing for you every day with at least one person.
2. Ask God to examine the hidden parts of your heart and life to see if there is any unconfessed sin, big or small. Offer a confession to the Lord for any sin He reveals. Thank Him for forgiveness.
3. Ask the Lord for 2-3 names of leaders you have. They could be teachers, employers, parents, spiritual leaders, governmental leaders, etc. Write down their names. Then take time to pray Psalm 67 vs 1-2 over each one. Add to your prayer things you know to pray for the individual or according to what the Holy Spirit reveals to you. (To pray Scripture, insert the individual's name and appropriate pronoun to make the verse make sense. For example, "God, please be gracious to Stephen Harper and bless him, and make your face shine on him so your ways may be known in his life and that your salvation would be known in his personal life and in his family.")

DAY 29**READ:** Psalm 68

A powerful image of God is found in verses 4-6 of Psalm 68. First we are told to sing to God and praise His name. When we read the word 'God' it conjures up the images just put in our mind through the first 5 verses of a God who is powerful and whose enemies scatter before Him. The wicked melt before God like wax melts in a fire. This is a mighty, fearsome God.

He is a God who rides on the clouds. He commands nature. He is majestic in size and power. The image in our minds of someone who rides the clouds is certainly someone who has authority over the heavens and earth.

He is the LORD. This word 'Lord' is the proper name of God. This is the Great I AM. Yahweh. Creator. Wow! It is **this** God who rides on the clouds, who is scattering the nations. He is a big God for big situations, tough when necessary, powerful and in control. But as we read on, we see this great and mighty God has more sides to Him if we just look.

He is a Father to the fatherless: To the tiny newborn left in a dumpster. To the foster kid who has moved from house to house and has no man to call Dad. To the young girl trafficked to keep greedy men paying more. To the teenager who wishes his dad was still alive to help him buy his first car. This mighty and majestic God **is their father**. The image is powerful as we imagine the rider of the clouds pause to hold a babe, or protect, or rescue, or discipline. This Creator is tender, and gentle, and has a heart for the unprotected.

Defender of the widows. The woman left with too many bills to pay. The mom with burdens of grief mixed in to a life of loneliness and hardship. The widow in Ethiopia who is tempted to sell herself because she is not otherwise employable. The wife whose husband

was killed for preaching the gospel who has to leave her home and family to save her life and her children's lives. This God of Justice **defends that widow**. He stands in the face against those who make life difficult for her, and who exploit her weakness. This is our God.

Sets the lonely in families. This Rider of the Clouds does not like it when people on the fringes are just peeking in. God invites them in, establishes families for them. And to be sure not a single one on earth would be left without family, He created the Church – The Family of God – so that each could have brothers and sisters and Father. He promises to be with us, and never to forsake us, right till the end. He longs for relationship. He is **that** God.

From mighty and magnificent, to tender and nurturing. This is **our** God.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord which of His characteristics you need (or have needed) even if you have never noticed? How has He been a Father to you? Has He commanded nature on your behalf? Has He set you in a family? Who does He want to be for you today? Spend time listening and asking Him to reveal both His nurturing and mighty heart to you today. Thank Him for how He has cared for you in the past.
2. Considering your day, your current situation, your stage in life – what is it you need from Jesus today? Spend a few minutes journaling and telling God what you need. Ask Him for a word, thought, picture or song to encourage you in the truth that He will be exactly what you need.
3. In order to grow in our faith and to look more like our Father in heaven, we can grow and do the things we see God doing. Ask Jesus if there is something He is calling you to practically do in order to be a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, to set the lonely in families. Listen carefully for His specific word for you. If He gives you an action to take, make a commitment to start on that today. If not, take a few minutes to pray for people who currently are in one of those situations.

DAY 30



READ: Psalm 69

Again in Psalm 69 David is in trouble. People are against him. He's worn out and ready to be swept away with the trouble and suffering. When David gets to this psalm he's already worn out from calling for help. He's called for help so long his throat is parched. Those who are against him have no good reason to be against him. Everything about his situation seems unjust. David says it is unfair to be treated this way for things he did not do. However, he also quickly points out to God he recognizes he is not perfect. He has sinned and is confident God knows what those sins are. Nothing is hidden. Yet people are accusing him of sin he hasn't committed. So David begs God not to let this false reputation bring disgrace to God's people.

David says in verse 13 that even though all this is happening and he is overwhelmed with all of it, and even though he's prayed before and not gotten an answer, he is going to pray again. David is not giving up on prayer or on God even though he hasn't gotten an answer yet. He declares his trust in God again, and in His love and salvation. His prayer is simply, "Answer me. Don't let me die now."

We have another passage in which David begs God for the punishment of his enemies. David's enemies may have been the army of Saul, or individuals who abandoned and tried to trap him. In this particular psalm David gets specific with how deeply he wants them to be attacked by God. He tells God to pour out His wrath over them, to charge them with

crimes, to remove their salvation, and have their names blotted out of the book of life. Those are some serious requests!

We may think we have no enemies today. Perhaps there are no armies chasing us down, and we are not running for our lives. However, the dangers we face daily on a spiritual level may be just as ominous as the enemies David faced; perhaps even more so. Some of us may struggle with an addiction that threatens to tear our families apart. Others may struggle with pride, bitterness or anger. Then there are those for whom gossip, gluttony and greed are a powerful driving force. When we look at verses 19 through 29 with this perspective, we can pray this prayer along with David. Oh, that God would slay our addictions to food or porn! Oh, that God would blot out of our lives even the desire to think poorly about someone else! When the enemy is not 'out there' but rather within our hearts, this psalm can become our own plea to God for freedom.

Verse 30 reminds us again how much more God is pleased with thanksgiving than with sacrifice. God doesn't need or want bulls or goats. What He really wants is our hearts of thanks.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. David is concerned about the reputation the people of God. He doesn't want his actions, or even false accusations about him, to negatively affect them. Spend time asking the Lord where your love for His people and His Church lie. Are you more concerned about your own welfare and reputation than that of the Church? Ask the Lord is there is something in your life that is negatively affecting His people and His Church. Listen carefully, write it down, confess anything if necessary, and give the Lord your commitment to honoring His Church with your actions and words.
2. What is an enemy you are facing in your heart right now? Ask the Lord to reveal to you what your enemy is, and how He wants to fight it with you. Pray, like David, that God would put your enemy to death and bring you freedom. Listen carefully to the voice of the Holy Spirit as He walks you from confession through to forgiveness, restoration, and freedom. Make a commitment to follow any obedience steps God gives you.
3. God really, really wants your thankful heart! Spend ten minutes (or as much time as you can) in prayer thanking God for everything you can. If you can, thank Him on your knees in humble gratitude.

DAY 31



READ: Psalms 70-71

Psalm 70 ends with an interesting twist. "Oh Lord, do not delay." This is paramount to saying, "Hurry up, God!" Surely David isn't saying for God to come like He will in the End. He is asking God to come to Him right that minute. We often think of the Holy Spirit as a New Testament entity, rather than part of the Godhead. If it wasn't for the Holy Spirit, David would not have been able to ask God to come quickly and then expect it. This can be huge encouragement for us in those times when we feel at the end of our rope, like David. We can ask God to come quickly because we need Him, just like David did. It's the Holy Spirit who will come minister to us and allow us to know and experience the presence of God. David needed, and desperately begged God for, that very personal presence of the Holy Spirit. How much more do we?

Psalm 71 is a beautiful psalm! David's heart is revealed. He says from his childhood he hoped in God. His confidence is in God alone. We have seen this evidenced psalm after

psalm. David really did have his whole life rooted in his God. Even others saw it and followed his example. He is constantly praising God, and makes it abundantly clear: God is his refuge. God is his hope. It is not in his strength, or ability, or riches, or status. It is in God. He says in verse 14 he will always have hope because God is his hope. He makes a commitment to praise Him more and more as his life goes on. There is no wonder why God said David was a man after His own heart.

When David talks of hope and confidence in God, he is not blindly denying that God has dealt him some difficulties. He hasn't avoided thinking about all the hardships, or even talking about them. We have seen how David clearly spoke to God about all his pain, suffering and persecution. We have watched as David nearly gave way to depression, yet hung on to God until the end. In verse 19 David praises God for all the great things He has done. Yet in verse 20, he is clear with the Lord that He caused him to see many bitter troubles. But even still – even after all that – David commits to praising God again. And not only to praise Him, but to sing of His faithfulness. It takes a man of courage and submission to say to God, who has handed him trouble after trouble, that He is praised for His faithfulness. Oh that we would see the faithfulness of God, even in troubled times.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. When was the last time you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit? Ask the Lord to come to you now so you can experience His love and attention. If sitting quietly before the Lord is difficult, ask Him specifically to show you exactly what He is doing in your life right now to shape and mold you into His character. Ask Him to reveal your current situation to you through His eyes. Write down your experience with God, and the things He says or shows you.
2. Ask God if your hope is 100% in Him. If it is, spend a few minutes in thanksgiving for all He has done for you and shown you. If not, ask Him what your hope is in instead. Ask Him to reveal to you the weakness of what you are hoping in and compare this to what you would have when you hope in Him. Write this all down. Ask for a word, thought, picture or song to encourage you in the days ahead to keep your hope in God alone.
3. Write down one or two really difficult things you have lived through. Now listen closely to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to show you five things you can be thankful for because of those difficult situations. It might be hard at first, but keep listening to God and letting His Spirit direct your thoughts to His Word, His promises, and His direction in your life.

DAY 32



READ: Psalm 72

This is a triumphant song to end Book II of the Psalms. This psalm is actually about Solomon. He was a king during whose reign there was peace. He was prosperous. He ruled a great kingdom. People, kings and queens, came from all over the world to hear his wise words and give him gifts.

It is also a psalm to be sung, not just to King Solomon, but to the King of kings. This is a beautiful foreshadowing of the glory the nations will bring to Jesus. When we remember much of the Old Testament was a picture God gave us to understand His plan for all humanity, we can see this psalm as a foreshadowing of when Jesus will reign as King on the earth.

This psalm gives us hope for eternity. We are reminded of the judgments God will make in perfect justice. Agriculture will no longer be riddled with drought, flood, pestilence and disaster. Children will be safe, and abusers will be crushed. Hope!

This perfect Kingdom will never end. It will be refreshing and life giving every single day. Every king will bow to the King. All nations will serve the King. He promises to deliver the needy and afflicted who have no help. Oppression will end. Violence will end. The entire population of the world will bless the King. They will praise His name and be blessed by Him. The entire world will be filled with His glory.

This psalm closes the second book of Psalms with such hope for heaven and eternity. We have so much to look forward to. What joy awaits those who serve this King!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. In King Solomon's day people came from all over to bring gifts of all kinds to honor him. Ask the Lord if there is something you can give Him today, or this week, or whatever He says, that would bring Him honor. Write down what He says and offer that to Him as He desires.
2. Based on the psalm and/or the struggles you have faced in your life, what is at least one thing you are grateful God will finally set right when Christ reigns on the earth as King? How does having this hope of true justice, and complete restoration make you feel?
3. Take several minutes to pray this Psalm to God. Change the pronouns to 'I' or to 'God' as appropriate, and read this as a prayer from the depths of your heart. Here's an example using the first 5 verses. You don't have to do it this way... make it your own



Books I & II of Psalms *Psalms 1-72*

Whether you are in the depths of despair, in a long-term health struggle, have just received a miracle or are celebrating the joys of life, Books I and II of Psalms will meet you where you are. If you love to study the law, or sense God's presence most when you are outside, this series of Psalms will stretch you, grow you, and let you see how God wants to be a functional and practical part of your every day life.

Psalm 41:13 (NIV)

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen."