



A Heart Like His

A Study of the Psalms of David

Written by members of
Warren Baptist Church

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Thank You!

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How to Best Use This Booklet:



1. Read the Psalm referenced for the day.
2. Then read the devotional thought connected to the Psalm.
3. Take a walk!
A “Walking Exercise” is included with each day as a way to continue your discovery. The walk can be shared with a family member or friend, or can be done solo.
4. Zoom it.
Join us on Thursdays when either Pastor Randy or Pastor Dave will host a Zoom call for all who choose to share reflections from the study. Look in your email on Wednesdays for the Thursday Zoom link.

Psalm 5 - Sunday, Nov 1, 2020

In this Psalm David is writing about wicked men using their words to destroy the righteous.

We don't know if these words were directed at David or at someone he knew. We do know that he found it so upsetting that he called his prayer a "cry for help." It is possible that he was so distraught that he spent the whole night thinking about what he should do. "In the morning" he rightly decided to pray and thereby take it to the Lord.

In David's prayer, first he acknowledged God's righteousness: "you take no pleasure in evil, with you the wicked cannot dwell, you hate all who do wrong" (vv. 4-5). Next, he assumed an attitude of humility, reverence and submission to God's direction while he openly and honestly poured out his hurt and anger to the Lord. In closing he offers up his praise and thankfulness for God's protection and blessing. By the end of the prayer David's strength and confidence have been restored. "You bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield" (v. 12).

We all know that the old phrase 'sticks and stone may break my bones, but words will never hurt me' is just not true. Words do hurt. As Christians we are called to show love to everyone. When the hurt you feel seems to make this impossible, you must take it to the Lord just like David did.

– Todd Martin



Walking Exercise:

This Psalm is filled with words noting an audible reference: Listen, hear, voice, mouth, throat, and tongue - all of them are used in this Psalm. So on your walk today, notice what sounds you hear. Listen and marvel at the world our Father has made.

Psalm 6 - Monday, Nov 2, 2020

For anyone who has gone through trying times, Psalm 6 is a needed reminder that we can cry out to God. The writer, David, does not specifically mention the source of his anguish. He does give some clues that his sorrow is the result of rebuke and chastening from God Himself. David senses this and poetically writes, “I am withered away, my bones are troubled, my soul is sore troubled” (vv. 2-3 ASV).

“I am weary with my groaning; Every night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye wasteth away because of grief; It waxeth old because of all mine adversaries.” (vv. 6-7). Another source of trouble, David’s enemies or adversaries.

Jesus says, “...In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b). This truth escapes no one. Jesus says to have courage, other translations say, “be of good cheer” or “take heart”. If I am honest with myself, I can admit that I am not particularly prone to good cheer when facing difficult circumstances. David himself isn’t exactly shouting from the rooftops words of jubilation. What I notice instead are other phrases indicating something deeper. “Jehovah, have mercy on me, heal me, deliver me, save me” (vv. 2,4). David recognizes the One who can bring healing, David’s personal friend, his God. David’s humble and contrite spirit I think is the key take away, his willingness to pour out his suffering to his Lord. Whether the situation was the result of personal consequences, enemies causing trouble, or God’s discipline, David took it back to Him to handle.

Ultimately, David asks, “In Sheol, who shall give thee thanks?” One more key attribute of David - a heart of gratitude and praise. Humility and praise, a man after God’s own heart, a heart that we can also have with God’s transforming power!
- Camille Nairn



Walking Exercise:

Today, walk down memory lane . . . remember the times God has been there for you. Thank Him for His faithfulness.

Psalm 8 - Tuesday, Nov 3,2020

I love that this Psalm begins with the wonder of God's overwhelming majesty! He created everything, all of it, with precision and beauty. It was perfection.

Then, the vastness of creation is contrasted with the smallness of man, even a baby. Because of God's love and purpose for us, mere humans, we have been given recognition by God and control over all of His creation. The Psalm tells us that we were created just a bit less than the angels. How amazing is that!

Our response to that is how we choose to live our lives, seeking Him and desiring to follow Him. Because He loves us, we have the ability to treasure His creation including our brothers and sisters and the plants and animals of the world, nurturing one another as well as doing our best to protect that which we have been given.

In the midst of challenges we have been experiencing this year we can know that our all-powerful and all-personal God cares deeply about each one of us and continues to give us the gifts of His creation, His presence, His power, and His people.

"Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Psalm 8:1

-Debbie McHugh



Walking Exercise:

On your walk, look carefully at the horizon. If you were to paint it, what colors would you use to capture its majesty? What does it teach you about God?

Psalm 9 - Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020

The needy shall not always be forgotten.

The expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. Psalm 9:18

I like that verse because I always give to the needy. Like those knit hats I make on a loom. Sometimes I give them to the Mexican Medical ministry. The missionaries share them with people and children who don't have enough clothing to keep them warm in the winter. It makes me feel good to help the needy because I know God cares about them.

There were times when MY family was needy and didn't have enough food to put on the table. This was in California. Somebody who we didn't even know from our church came to our house in the pouring rain and brought us bags of groceries. Then in Oregon one winter, my mom and I were snowbound in our house for four or five days. Her friend and sister went grocery shopping and bought us everything we needed, right down to pet food. Those are the best memories I have. I feel blessed that God would take care of us in those ways.

And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee (v. 10).

I am thankful for the ways God has been with me. I am thankful for my sister and brother-in-law because they take good care of me. They are keeping the promise they made to my mom before she passed away. They would do anything for me. I am also thankful for the friendships I have at our church.

I will give praise to Thee O Lord, with my whole heart!

I will be glad and rejoice in Thee! (v.1a & 2a) - Michelle Settles



Walking Exercise: Today, as you walk, whistle, hum, or sing songs of praise. Allow your heart to tell all the wonderful things God has done.

Psalm 11 - Thursday, Nov. 5, 2020

Theme: *Because we can trust Him, we can face our problems.*

Psalm 11 is one of several accounts of David being forced to flee for his life. Being God's anointed King did not protect him from injustice or hatred. In this Psalm, it is not clear if David is fleeing from Saul or his son Absalom, after Absalom's rebellion. Either way, David knew that not all was lost, and his God was in control and "still ruled from Heaven" (v.4).

The Lord does not spare his followers from problems. "He examines both the righteous and the wicked" (v.5) and when he tests us, we are to respond in a manner that glorifies Him. When the chips are down, I think of my friend Gary. Every moment of every day, he battles ALS. It's a battle that no one wants to fight, but Gary's testimony and that of his family has never shined brighter. A t-shirt he wears says it all "ALS tries to make me weak but my faith in God has made me stronger".

Although it often seems like this evil world is winning and "all the foundations of law and order have collapsed" (v.3), as believers we know that in the end, God's justice will prevail. "He will rain down blazing coals on the wicked" (v.6) and those who love him will spend eternity with him.

V.7 For the Lord is righteous, and He loves justice. Those who do what is right will see his face.

– Pete McHugh



Walking Exercise:

On your walk, pray today for each house (or car, or person) you pass. God sees each and knows their story - ask Him to make His story known to them.

Psalm 15 - Friday, Nov. 6, 2020

“Cruise-in”

It’s a home the likes of which most of us have never seen, much less owned. It’s a 10,000 square foot home situated in the mountains of Colorado. It sits on 298 acres and features a tennis court, basketball court, ice hockey rink, private hiking trails, and its own 3-bedroom guest house.

At the time of this writing, it’s for sale. Currently it belongs to Tom Cruise, but it could belong to you. What would it take? Only 59 million dollars.

David asks, “Lord, who can dwell in your tent?” (v. 1). If 59 million is what it takes to live in Tom Cruise’s house, what does it take to live in God’s?

The answer? God’s house is reserved for the one filled with integrity, who controls his or her tongue, who keeps his or her word – no matter the cost, who lives blamelessly, and who treats others as God does.

Without Jesus, I’ve got a better shot at living in Tom’s home – how ‘bout you?

Thank you, Jesus, for your incredible gift – I’m clothed in your righteousness. What David could only dream about is my reality. Thank you.

– Randy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

As you walk, note the “homes” you pass . . . not just the houses, but the nests, the cocoons, and shelters of all God’s creatures. Then marvel at the home He’s prepared for you.

Psalm 16 - Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020

*I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you" Psalm 16:2 (ESV).*

Really? Seriously, David? Aren't there many great things out there in the world to be desired, to enjoy?

We sure act like it. We run after satisfaction in experiences and accomplishments, possessions, and positions.

I have tried it frequently throughout my life. Despite an ability to explain Biblical principles, I would engineer and grasp for significance and comfort that I had deceived myself into thinking I needed. Emptiness, depression, and total disasters were some of the results. What can I expect if I live to delight the Lord, rather than to advance and delight myself? What will life hold when it is Jesus I hold as that anticipated cup between my palms, and leave the estate planning up to him?

Paul asserts, "He who did not spare His own son but gave him up for us all, how will He not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). We believers accept that because we have the resurrected Christ we possess forgiveness, His righteousness, and eternal life (no small treasures!), but do we often consider that in the adoption process our inheritance also becomes *every other* thing worth having? These are not simply all the things that we can think of. These are all the things **God** has thought of - created for His children to enjoy, free for the taking.

The one I find most unmatched, most overwhelmingly wondrous is described in Psalm 16, to be experienced only when I "set the Lord always before me" (v. 8), to look deeply at, to listen intently to. To be sure, it's an effort in the Living Word requiring focused energy, time, and wise help from others. But in this aligning our Father consistently and abundantly discloses incredible aspects of Himself that I couldn't have imagined. It is always worth it; it always compels a bursting heart and wide-eyed

worship. This, I have recently realized, is an inseparable part of what we have been given with Christ. Why have I ever looked away to settle for the breakable trinkets and shallow relationships of my own imagination?

The psalmist's climactic conclusion has him basking from here on out in pleasures at **God's right hand**. Yet in verse 8 the Lord is described at the **poet's right hand**, as well as "before" him. By this, I picture the presence of the Lord as a surrounding bundle, the center of which where we are meant to live our life.

Since "in Christ" all precious things that exist are found, no wonder we are to look no further for our good; that we are encouraged to expect nothing less than "fullness of joy" (v. 11).

– Vivian Ward



Walking Exercise:

As you walk today, imagine the Lord is walking with you - just the two of you walking. What might your conversation be? "With Him at my right hand . . ." (vs. 8)

Psalm 18 - Sunday, Nov. 8, 2020

Psalm 18 has strong imagery of our dependence on God, our dire plight, and His incredible power. What a Psalm!

Psalm 18:7-15 states, "The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because he was angry. Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him - the dark rain clouds of the sky. Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced, with hailstones and bolts of lightning. The Lord thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded. He shot his arrows and scattered the enemies, great bolts of lightning and routed them. The valleys of the sea were exposed and the foundations of the earth laid bare at your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of breath from your nostrils."

Wow! But then...

Psalm 18:17-19 "He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place, he rescued me because he delighted in me."

Vs. 28, 29 "You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning, my God turns my darkness into light. With your help I can advance against a troop, with my God I can scale a wall."

The Holy Bible: New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984)

Even in the days when I feel overwhelmed, that my problems and difficulties are too much, that I am unlovable and unworthy, Psalm 18 reminds me that God rescues me *because He delights in me*. It reminds

me that *He is the one who keeps my lamp burning, and with His help I can move forward.*

I want to do things in my own power, to figure out the answer, to come up with the solution. (That is part of my attraction to action movies, where the hero through great personal effort overcomes evil.) But my problems are bigger than I am and so many factors are completely beyond my control. God keeps reminding me to trust Him. (He has to keep reminding me because I am stubborn, and I keep trying to do it on my own.) Psalm 18 reminds me of my need for God, and of His incredible power.

Lord, help us to remember that whatever we are going through, whatever is going on around us, you are bigger. That we need you. That you delight in us. That your way is perfect. Thank you that you love us, Lord.

– Steve Washburn



Walking Exercise:

As you walk, note the signs of transformation you see in nature. How do they remind you of what God has done in your life?

Psalm 19 - Monday, Nov. 9, 2020

Psalms 19 (from The Living Bible)

The heavens are telling the glory of God; they are a marvelous display of his craftsmanship. Day and night, they keep on telling about God. Without a sound or word, silent in the skies, their message reaches out to all the world. The sun lives in the heavens where God placed it and moves out across the skies as radiant as a bridegroom going to his wedding or as joyous as an athlete looking forward to a race. The sun crosses the heavens from end to end, and nothing can hide from its heat.

God's laws are perfect. They protect us, make us wise, and give us joy and light. God's laws are pure, eternal, just. They are sweeter than honey dripping from a honeycomb. For they warn us away from harm and give success to those who obey them.

But how can I ever know what sins are lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. And keep me from deliberate wrongs; help me to stop doing them. Only then can I be free of guilt and innocent of some great crime. May my spoken words and unspoken thoughts be pleasing even to you, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Our family camps at the central Oregon coast every summer. The clarity of the sky there at night is amazing. With the naked eye we see the Milky Way bands and so many stars! We always take the telescope along, put a box in front of it, and let the kids stand on it to look through the scope. They get so excited seeing the craters of the moon, rings of Saturn, and Jupiter's spots. The heavens speak to everyone around the world, silently and majestically, proclaiming there is a powerful creator, our God.

God also speaks to us through The Bible, His law. In Psalms 19, David tells us the purpose of His law is to guide us through life on earth, and if we obey, we will be blessed. Have you ever met a Christian who is always happy and cheerful? Have you noticed their face is glowing with God's love? Having a relationship with God and living a life obedient to God brings joy and happiness. This is a serious reminder to me to keep His law and discipline in mind every day.

So, the next time you gaze up at the night sky or soak up the warm golden sun, remember they were placed in the sky for all of us by our almighty God. He is ours and we belong to him, forever and forever.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your magnificent creation for all the world to see. Thank you for your word, so that we can know what you expect of us. Please help us to seek a better relationship with you by obeying your law. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

-Dana Levin



Walking Exercise:

As you walk today, allow your eyes to examine the skies. What do they tell you about the Father? "The heavens declare the glory of God . . ." (vs 1)



Psalm 20 - Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2020

May the LORD answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion. May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings. May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. May we shout for joy over your victory and lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the LORD grant all your requests. Psalm 20: 1-5

I am struck by David's specificity in these five verses. There is directness and assurance in these requests. God is called on to answer, to protect, to send, to grant, to remember, to give, to make. These aren't just wishy-washy appeals but bold petitions.

Why could David confidently pen, and the people pray, these verses over the king (David himself) as he went out to battle? Because of trust. "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God" (v. 7). David had seen God show himself faithful (v. 6). This gave David the assurance to call on God, to speak with certitude, and to go forward, knowing he would "rise up and stand firm" (v. 8).

I have chariots. Even some horses. They are my health. My husband. Money. My "to do" list. All things that I rely on. It is easy to have the mindset that as long as I have these securities, I can boldly tackle the day or the battles of life. However, like David, I too have seen God faithful in times of difficulty and distress. Therefore, I can be confident. I can be specific in my prayers. I can trust... in God alone.

Lord, you turn your heart to us and hear us. Thank you for your presence and protection and the provision of so many good things. We trust in you. Help us to trust you more. May you "answer us when we call" (v. 9b).
- Shelley Harley



Walking Exercise:

Our confidence is based in the nature of our God. He is trustworthy. On your walk, note the things that prove He is worthy of your trust. (vs. 7)

Psalm 22 - Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2020

Theme: God rules, do not despair! (Includes prophesy of the crucifixion.)

My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; An evil gang closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and feet. I can count every bone in my body. My enemies stare at me and gloat. They divide my clothes among themselves and cast lots for my garments. (v.16-18)

When I first read this passage, it shook me to the core! I was a relatively new Christian, and I was taking a class about the Old Testament. I already believed the Bible, but this was the first time that I had read prophecy that had been clearly fulfilled. After reading that they “casted lots for his clothes”, my heart almost stopped. I remember reading no further and just focusing on these verses for several minutes. I was fixated on the fact it had been written 1000 years prior to the actual event. I thought who could deny the Bible? If people would just read it and believe it, the world would be so much better. It was around then I cemented in my mind that people can have the truth right in front of them and still deny it. It was a sobering and sad reality.

The majority of Psalm 22 is about David believing his world is caving in and not feeling God’s presence. Personally, I cannot relate to this part of the Psalm because in my journey, I believe God has been with me every step of the way. But I do understand how David must have felt. This is a man who has experienced big, risky events in his life, gruesome battles, beheaded a giant and faced death regularly. A leader who was loved greatly but also hated by many. Even though he wanted to feel God directing him, he knew from experience that his God ruled, and better days were ahead. Verses 22-31 illustrate this confidence. To me, his anger, frustration and paranoia just revealed his humanness. Sometimes our humanness takes control of our spiritual side. I do not fault David. I think God loved his honesty.

- Gary Garner



Walking Exercise:

This Psalm has the power to “shake one to the core.” As you walk, identify other truths from God that have shaken you.

Psalm 23 - Thursday, Nov. 12, 2020

NOTE: Today is a BONUS Day . . . Psalm 23 is such a beautiful Psalm, two of our folks have written on it . . . and we are all the benefactors.

UNENDING LOVE

When I was 14 years old I left home, traveled from Oklahoma to Oregon, where I have lived for the past seventy three years. Were there times of danger, of risks, sometimes of fear? Absolutely. But at that age nothing would stop me from what I felt would be greener pastures.

Finding your way through life can be difficult, but can also be made easier when you have the right One leading the way. Who is the right one? David gave us a comforting and compelling answer. "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1). David himself was a shepherd. He knew of the incessant care sheep required and their helplessness. He recalled their foolish straying from safe places and their constant need for a guide. He remembered the times he led them through danger. He thought much about their bruises and scratches he had bound up. He marveled at how frequently he had to rescue them. Yes, he mused, God is very much like a good shepherd.

Hundreds of years after David composed this Shepherds' Song, Jesus said with quiet assurance: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11a).

This Psalm is short but packed with powerful promises and purpose. David sums up his life in the final verse: needs will be met, guidance will be provided, and forgiveness through mercy are all his because he determined to depend on the good shepherd for the rest of his life.

I too am committed to continue my journey with the Good Shepherd. His love has never failed me.

My question to you is, can you do the same?

Heavenly Father what a comfort to know that you will provide for our every need, lead us down the right path, protect and guide us, that you are preparing a place for us, that no good thing will be withheld from us, and that you will come again someday. You, my Lord, are my Shepherd. What more should I want? - Bonnie Tipton

Psalm 23 - Continued

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

Psalm 23:4 KJV

From verse 1 until verse 6...the theme is ALL GOOD, comforting, strength, joy, mercy, anointing, etc. But verse 4 has always been confusing to me until one day in The City of Nepal...

We were walking on a very packed, busy sidewalk, with hundreds of people, packed together, going their own way. Adding to that chaos, the dirt streets were mostly non-existent...with holes and broken cement, now filled with crowds of people walking any direction...MANY small children holding tight to their mom's skirts...and many young children ON THEIR OWN. Trucks and taxis joined the crowd...stop lights were ignored... A great tourist site! THEN: I saw this most amazing sight that has kept me strong thru many trials thru the years!

In the middle of all this chaos, there was a SHEPHERD HERDING his flock of very tall SHEEP! Sheep!!! The flock was about 50 sheep or more. All he did to guide them was use 2 long sticks! I could not do anything but stare at this AMAZING site. Each group of sheep had just one shepherd... If a sheep started straying, the shepherd gently would tap the stick on the sheep's side and bring him back into order...He did not scream or hit the sheep. IMMEDIATELY that sheep moved back where he belonged...with the Shepherd and flock...!!!

We are THE LORD'S SHEEP. Sometimes we are actually walking WITH THE TRAFFIC on the muddy road...(the world)... until the shepherd moves that

long stick and taps the sheep (that's us) gently...Immediately, we (the sheep) would obey. OH HALLELUJAH! What a LOVING, GENTLE, MIGHTY GOD WE follow!! We can trust HIM. - Carol Hall

Because the Lord is my Shepherd, I have everything I need!
(Psalm 23:1)



Walking Exercise:

Today, pick one phrase from this beautiful Psalm. For example, "I shall not want" or, "Through the valley." Meditate on this one phrase as you walk.

Psalm 24 - Friday, Nov. 13, 2020

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting door, and the King of glory shall come in.” Such are the words that begin the chorus of section 33 of one of Georg Friedrich Handel’s most famous oratorios, *Messiah*. Of course, Handel is given the credit for this musical composition, but the textual compilation was that of someone less known, Charles Jennens.

Charles Jennens was a solitary man, deeply religious, and most of all loved the arts. He not only compiled the libretto for *Messiah* but contributed to many of Handel’s musical pieces. You could almost suggest that *Messiah* would “not be” without Jennens, any more than it would “not be” without Handel.

Despite the genius of Jennens's choice of scripture to capture the birth, life, death, resurrection, and reign of Christ, why use Psalm 24: 7-10? It is thought that David wrote this Psalm when he brought the ark back to Jerusalem. The ark had been captured earlier by the Philistines, now the glory of God was returning. David’s celebration of the return of the ark, his words of awe and exaltation, a warrior king himself acknowledging the true Warrior, a true worshipper rallying his people to turn their hearts to YAHWEH, what a joyous occasion!

It is difficult for me as a New Testament Christian, to fully grasp the idea of the presence of the Living God in an earthly tabernacle. And yet, that is just exactly the reality of the Christian today. David's words spoke also to a future time. One who truly welcomes Christ into their heart is one in which the King of the Glory is pleased to come in. Celebration indeed!

But that doesn’t answer the question, Why did Jennens use Psalm 24? This chorus is bookended on the left by Psalm 16:10, “For thou wilt not

leave my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.”

On the right, Hebrews 1:6, “...And Let all the angels of God worship him.” This Christ, who in His death was cast to Sheol, Psalm 16, who rose to enter the heavenly gates of heaven, Psalm 24, and who is worshipped by angels, Hebrews 16, is the same Christ that dwells in the souls of those who love Him.

Handel’s *Messiah* is performed all over the world as a tradition in the Christmas season. I have seen it countless times performed by many different companies. I am struck every time I hear these words, by the inspired choice of scripture. I love the idea that many of the people who are sitting around me, who may not know the King of Glory are being given the whole account of Christ in a precise, condensed oratorio. I think that is Amazing!

“Who is this King of Glory? Jehovah of Hosts, He is the King of Glory!”
- Camille Nairn

Note: Handel’s *Messiah* was first performed in April of 1742 in Dublin, intended as a piece to be performed during the Easter season. Jennens penned the following words as a preface to the wordbook to this first performance: And without Controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness - God was manifested in the Flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory. In whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.



Walking Exercise:

As you walk by different property lines today, remember, the earth and everything in it belongs to Him. What difference does this make?
What are the implications?

Psalm 25 - Saturday, Nov. 14, 2020

Psalm 25:7 *“Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to Your lovingkindness remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O Lord.”*

On my recent trip, I visited the town in South Dakota where I grew up. It was like stepping back in time for me, as I had not been there in many years. It was great to see my family, but as I drove through town and walked some familiar sidewalks, bad memories came to my mind. Things I had done as a youth growing up, some of them stupid, some of them hurtful or thoughtless, and some of them wrong and harmful to myself and/or other people. I felt ashamed and hoped there was nobody still around who remembered any of those acts. Yet, at the same time, I wanted to find those people whom I had hurt and apologize. I told myself how silly that was, those things happened over 50 years ago. People would not remember (hopefully), but I sure did. But even if others may forgive me, how could I forgive myself?

Remember, Linda, the Lord has already forgiven you. He sent his Son to die on the cross for the forgiveness of sins for those who believe and repent. That was a huge cost the Lord paid for my sins and it is more than enough to cover all the sins I committed or will yet commit. I have come to realize that it is not necessary to require that I must forgive myself in addition to that. Christ's sacrifice is all that is needed, and by demanding I learn to forgive myself I am saying that Christ's death for my sins was not enough. It is enough, more than enough, and it is all I need. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). Yes, there are still consequences lingering for many of the sins I have committed in my life, but my job in that regard is to learn from those mistakes, make amends as best I can, repent, and “forgetting what lies behind, and reaching forward to what lies ahead” (Philippians

3:13). I must shed the shroud of shame and guilt so that I can be truly free to serve and live for the Lord.

Thank you, heavenly Father, for your forgiveness and lovingkindness, for sending your Son to pay the price for my sins and for removing them forever from your mind. May I live in such a way as to be healed of the paralyzing power of guilt and live in the freedom of your love to honor your Name.

– Linda Frey



Walking Exercise:

Walk today carefully - imagining you are blind. If you had a guide, what would you want from him/her? What would they expect from you? What kind of guide is the Father and how good are you at following His lead?

Psalm 27 - Sunday, Nov. 15, 2020

Psalm 27 has a lot to say about trusting God, especially when it comes to fear. In the last few months people around the globe have been fearful of many things - health, welfare, and uncertainty of what the future might bring.

David writes, “The Lord is my light and the one who saves me, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” (v. 1). When I think of the times I've been afraid, I'm reminded of when I was around 8 or 9 years old. We lived on the top floor of a three-story house. To get to our front door we had to walk up those flights of steps on the outside of the house. At that time of my life I was sure that after dark there was something lurking under the stairs near the bottom. I was so afraid I was going to be attacked that I would jump to the ground, skipping the last 5 stairs to avoid this unknown creature. One Friday evening after returning home from the grocery store, my parents made a surprising spur-of-the-moment decision to say 'yes' to a camping trip with our cousins. I was so happy and joyful about this news! We quickly began to pack and take things down to the car. Even though it was well after dark, I went up and down those stairs, hitting every step. Not only that, I ran underneath the stairs yelling, “I don't care whatever you are, I'm not afraid of you 'cause you can't touch me, I'm going camping!”

Like the joy in anticipation of camping overcame my fears, we as believers should be able to overcome our fears with the anticipation of spending eternity with our Lord Jesus Christ. David knew who to turn to to calm his fears. We can rely on that same everlasting God. “I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord!” (v. 6).

– Larry Ward



Walking Exercise:

“This one thing I ask from the Lord . . .” On your walk, look for “one” main thing that reminds you of God’s goodness.

Psalm 30 - Monday, Nov. 16, 2020

Happy Feet

Ever been so happy you did a little dance? Maybe it was when you passed the test; or got the job you wanted; or the day your honey, said, “I do;” or maybe it was when your daughter was born . . . but do you remember the feelings involved?

Elation. Jubilation. Shock. A sense of wonder. Your mind was struggling to comprehend your good fortune, but at the same time, your body was pumping out adrenaline and before you knew it, without thinking about it, your feet started moving, your face erupted with a smile and your heart began to soar. You were dancing with joy.

To understand Psalm 30, you need to remember those times. This is not a Psalm to be read while sitting in your armchair – get up! Read it again but read it with a smile on your face and joy in your heart.

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 8:5).

Let that thought sink in . . . but be warned, if you get it, really get it, you might just start dancing.

- Randy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

If possible, let your joy cause you to walk more briskly today: wailing has been turned into dancing (vs 11). Walk and reflect on God’s victories.

Psalm 31 - Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2020

“Lions and tigers, and bears, oh my.”

“Luke, I am your Father.”

“Go ahead. Make my day.”

For most Americans, the phrases above are well known – reading them brings up images of, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Star Wars*, and *Dirty Harry*.

Psalm 31 is like that. Jesus quoted verse 5 as he died upon the cross, “Into your hands I commit my spirit.” Those nearby would have thought of this Psalm much like Americans are prompted by one phrase to recall an entire story. It wasn’t an accident Jesus referred to this Psalm – He recognized his own story was found in its words. He just didn’t have the breath in his body to quote it all. So he quoted one phrase and allowed us to fill in the blanks.

Knowing this, reread this Psalm with the cross of Jesus in view. Ask yourself:

- What now strikes you?
- What humbles you?
- What do you think gave Jesus the confidence to trust his spirit to God’s keeping?
- How might the words of this Psalm given our Savior hope even as He died?
- How does it encourage you to “Be strong and take heart all you who hope in the Lord.” (v. 24)

- Randy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

Hundred of years before Jesus was born, this Psalm outlined the last hours of our Savior’s life. As you walk, meditate on how God knows our every step. From start to finish, He is on our side.

Psalm 32 - Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2020

A Hiding Place

You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Psalm 32:7

We live our lives with a view of the past, present, and future. We are aware and contemplate each of these in our day-to-day existence by recalling what we did yesterday, what we plan to do today, and what we hope tomorrow brings.

In Psalm 32 we are taken along this progression as David wrestles with *past* sin and pain where in keeping silent his “bones wasted away through my groaning all day long” (v. 3). Like David, the weight of unconfessed sin can leave us exhausted and beaten down to the point of despair. Where can we turn? In an honest confession of his sin, David is led by the LORD’s sure hand to a *present* state of safety and security from his past turmoil: “You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance” (v. 7). What a picture! I imagine a lone rock off the Oregon coast during a winter storm, but so much more. A place where God not only is with us but ready to forgive and protect us.

God’s faithfulness in being this sure and solid place, gives David - and us - a hope for the *future* where the LORD surrounds him with love and leads him to “Rejoice in the LORD and be glad” (v. 11a), ending this three-part progression in a different place than when he started. May we learn to recognize times in our life where these words can encourage and teach us as well.

Where have you had a similar experience in your life? How does God manifest himself in your life as a hiding place and a place of refuge?

Lord, help us to be honest and aware of your forgiveness when we struggle with our sin. Give us the assurance of your ability to care for us in the midst of our most difficult times and bless us with the joy and gladness of an upright heart.
Amen. – David Harley



Walking Exercise:

Today on your walk, smile. Smile big. “How joyful is the one whose transgression is forgiven.”

Psalm 34 - Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020

DOES THE LORD REALLY HEAR YOU WHEN YOU PRAY?

I will Bless the Lord at all times ...Oh Magnify the Lord with me and let us Exalt His name together. Psalm 34: 1-3

My wife and I are former missionaries of 23 years in Japan. We were actually pastor-missionaries of an International congregation in Nagoya...we loved all the people from about 17 nations. Many from Japan, Philippines, Africa, and a few Americans.

An interesting thing about many Japanese people: a great number of them have a special room or a special place in a room where they light candles and go to pray to their ancestors. I don't think many get answers--at least not from the Lord.

Psalm 34 tells us that God does hear us when we pray...see verse 4, 6, 15, and 17. Peter, Paul and Jesus encourage us to pray and to listen for answers... believe me the Lord does answer our prayers, sometimes the answer is not what we want and sometimes it could take time...even years but HE does answer us at the right time.

I'm wondering if it might be a good thing in our homes to have a special place to pray? If the many unsaved in Japan have a special place to pray, might we do any less in our homes?

Blessings,

- Gary & Carol Hall (retired)

HOW HAS GOD SUSTAINED YOU IN TIMES OF NEED --- WHEN YOU PRAYED?

Thank you Lord for always hearing us when we pray...give us Faith for one step more!



Walking Exercise:

Today, as you walk, do something good for someone else. Leave a note of encouragement on a neighbor's door, help rake some leaves, or strike up a positive conversation. "Do what is good." (vs 14)

Psalm 36 - Friday, Nov. 20, 2020

This wasn't the Psalm I was going to choose; in fact, I was mad because the one I wanted to do had already been taken, so I decided I just wasn't going to do one. After reading this passage I realized how relevant this actually was to me. I can't help but feel that God was trying to tell me something. "In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin. The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful; they fail to act wisely or do good" (Psalm 36:2-3).

In life there is sin around us always. We are tempted all the time. I constantly justify little sins because of my generation and the things that are normalized now. It can be especially hard to resist sin when your friends are doing it, and the more I choose to sin the more I drift from God and my little sins become bigger. But it seems anytime I made choices with God in mind I always felt more confident and happy with my decision. "How priceless is your unfailing love, oh God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings" (Psalm 36:7). But even when I make all the wrong choices God never fails to love and to teach me with my mistakes because God's never-ending love and forgiveness make all things in life perfect.

– Savannah Mogray



Walking Exercise:

Never-ending love . . . as you walk today, notice the horizon. It's vast, expansive, but never-ending? Yet God's love is described as such. Think about what this means.

Psalm 37 - Saturday, Nov. 21, 2020

Psalm 37

Psalm 37 is full of reminders to live a righteous life. David offers many examples of how we are to do this. Some of these are to "trust in," "delight yourself in," "commit your way to," and "be still before" the Lord. He speaks of the benefits God gives the righteous. We will be upheld, provided for, blessed and our steps made firm.

David also addresses one of our temptations -- envy of the wicked. It is easy to compare ourselves to others who seem to be blessed even when they do wicked deeds. David reminds us that the Lord isn't surprised by evil plans and even knows that the wicked's downfall is coming. He encourages us, instead of joining them, to "turn from evil and do good." He trusted that salvation comes from the Lord.

Best of all, because we all fail, David gives us verse 24. It says, "... though he stumbles, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand." How comforting to know that while we try to trust, delight and commit to God he holds us so we cannot fall out of his love.

– Ellen Barley



Walking Exercise:

Verse 24 highlights the thought of walking with the Lord - and Him holding your hand. On your walk, talk to Him about what this means to you.

Psalm 39 - Sunday, Nov. 22, 2020

Sometimes our guilt and shame overwhelm us. We know we have failed. We are sorry - even repentant - but we know we will fail again. It may seem like there is no point to our short lives. Feeling this way, David cries out to God in his despair. He asks God for his perspective. He acknowledges God is the only one who can offer hope. He begs for forgiveness. He wants to be reconciled to God.

Because of Jesus we know the answer to David's prayer. God made a way for us to be forgiven - the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. It was such a huge sacrifice that it can cover all our shame. Because of this, if we have accepted Christ's offer of forgiveness, we have been reconciled to God. We get to start our relationship with God on this side of heaven.

Psalm 39 ends with David still in deep despair waiting for God's answer. But [spoiler] the first verse of Psalm 40 is "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry." Praise the Lord!

- Ellen Barley



Walking Exercise:

"I am speechless . . . because of what You have done" (vs. 9). Walk today in silence - but as you walk, soak in all that God has done, is doing, and will do.

Psalm 40 - Monday, Nov. 23, 2020

'I waited patiently for the Lord, he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.' Psalm 40: 1-2

If you've ever had a panic attack, you'll know what it feels like to live in a slimy pit. In my 20s, I suffered from almost disabling panic attacks, almost to the point where I feared I couldn't even go to work anymore. It often felt as though I was suffocating, and the physical symptoms were so real, I felt like I was going to die. I couldn't sleep and had 2 young children to raise. How would I survive? In many ways, I had always felt like I couldn't find my footing in life. I was scarred from childhood, having a mother who was impossible to please and suffered from mental problems. I found little stability and security anywhere, it seemed. I realized that no therapist, no pill, no earthly relationship or temporary distraction could save me, there was only one way to turn, and that was upwards. I cried out to the Lord in my anguish and desperation, opened my Bible and found many life-saving promises, including Philippians 4:5-7 and the verse above in Psalm 40. I discovered that at that time when I had nothing else in my life to grab hold of, God was all I needed. I never felt a thunderbolt of immediate relief, but slowly, reading more of God's Word and trusting Him, a peace came into my heart and I have held onto it for dear life, the peace which surpasses understanding that can only come from God.

It's difficult to describe how, after slipping and sliding in the mud and stumbling on shifting sand, how grateful I am to have found "a firm place to stand", one where I am safe in God's hands. My panic attacks are a thing of the distant past, I'm glad to say. And as one of my favorite hymns says:

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness . . . On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."

- Linda Frey



Walking Exercise:

Okay, today is the day to say, repeatedly, "The Lord is Great!" (vs. 16) On your walk, marvel at what God has done and verbally confess His greatness.

Psalm 51 - Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2020

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Psalm 51:10 – 12, NIV

This verse has always had an impact on me. As a kid I understood what it meant to desire righteousness, to desire to follow God! But I didn't understand what it meant to desire renewal, to desire restoration! I just knew that I wanted to follow God, to love and forgive all.

As I grew up, I've experienced anger, resentment, greed, jealousy. I came to understand the difficulty of pursuing God's righteousness. How difficult it is to love those who hate you, to forgive those who condemn you, to grieve for those who commit great acts of sin.

We are tempted by our sinful nature, yet we desire God's righteousness! Hate, greed, loathing plague our thoughts, yet we ask for God's wisdom and guidance! Time and time again we are reminded of our flaws. We get angry. We get impatient. We have moments of sin and discouragement. But we desire love, hope, and kindness!

We are human! We are flawed! But more than that, we are loved! Whenever we are upset, we have this reminder that God is here for us! That He can restore us! That there is hope in Him! In Psalm 51:17 David says "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise."

Whenever you find yourself falling from the path of God, remember this prayer! Pray to God for guidance, for patience and wisdom! Put this prayer to heart! He will surely grant it!

- Jonathan Maywald



WalkingExercise:

This is a Psalm of brokenness. Today as you walk, look for things that are broken. Imagine them whole. What power would that require? Then marvel at how God has made you whole.

Psalm 55 - Wednesday, Nov. 25, 2020

I promise you, it was the most compact and rocky soil I'd ever seen. Usually this was not a problem. The soil and I had an arrangement. He stayed outside and minded his own business, and I let him just lie on the ground. Admittedly, there were occasions where he got wet and would cling to my shoe and there were times when he was dry and I kicked him around creating dust. But for the most part, we were compliant neighbors.

However, that wasn't the case on this particular day. I was planting a bush. My assumption was he would yield to the pressures of my shovel. Was I surprised. He was reluctant to give up an inch and no matter how determined I was, like bullets fired at Superman's chest, my shovel bounced off without so much as a dent. That's when my father-in-law saved the day.

He showed up in the backyard with a 4-foot-long auger bit and an electric drill. The ground surely trembled at the sight of this magnificent tool. Within minutes, the soil released its grip and my shovel hit pay-dirt. The hole was dug and the bush planted.

"Randy, all you need to do is ask. I'm happy to help." Those were the kind words of my experienced father-in-law. All I needed do was ask.

How many burdens do we carry unnecessarily. We allow our limited resources to limit our actions. But all the while our all-powerful Father stands at the ready. All we need do is ask.

"Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken." (v. 22)

- Randy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

"Cast your burdens on the Lord" (vs. 22). On your walk focus on giving Him all your burdens - see if your steps don't get lighter.

Psalm 62 - Thursday, Nov. 26, 2020

My soul, wait silently for God alone, For my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Psalm 62:5-7

It is early morning. I can see the big, old oak tree across the road as I look out my kitchen window. It's October. I watch as a breeze showers the tree's leaves across the field. This winter I'll study the tree's framework of tangled limbs and branches. In the spring life will begin anew as green begins to appear. By summer the branches will be completely clothed in leaves that will "sing" a rustling tune with warm breezes. The cycle repeats every year. Regardless of the season, the oak tree stands just as it was yesterday and the day before, firm and immovable. An old hymn, "I Shall Not be Moved" comes to mind:

Anchored in Jehovah, I shall not be moved

In His love abiding...And in Him confiding, I shall not be moved

Though all Hell assail me...Jesus will not fail me, I shall not be moved

Though the tempest rages...On the rock of ages, I shall not be moved

Just like the tree that's planted by the water, I shall not be moved

In Psalm 62, David declares his steadfast faith in God. God is his salvation and his glory. God is his rock of strength and his refuge. In God alone he trusts. David will not be moved.

David chose to believe in God's promises. In the midst of today's seemingly never-ending crises is my faith strong? Is it steadfastly rooted in God's promises? *Father, like this old oak tree just outside my window reminds me of David's faith, I pray for a spirit that stands firm and immovable.*

– Judy Crafton



Walking Exercise:

On your walk today, think about what it means to rest in God alone. Along your path, look for evidences of things at rest. What do they teach you?

Psalm 63 - Friday, Nov. 27, 2020

O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your love is better than life, My lips shall praise You. Psalm 63:1-3 (NKJV)

Have you ever been really thirsty? I experienced extreme thirst on a hike once. We were prepared with plenty of water, the right clothes, and boots. The trail was unfamiliar and lacked signs tracking our progress. The day grew very hot, and the trail was arduous. We came upon a fellow hiker who had run completely out of water. We offered to share the little water we had left. She accepted the water and said we weren't far from the trail head. Clearly, her interpretation of "not far" was much different than ours! When we finally reached the parking lot, my throat was so dry, and my head hurt. All I could think about was drinking water. Nothing else mattered.

In Psalm 63, David writes that he is thirsty for God as if he were in a desert without water. Have you ever wanted God so much that nothing else mattered? Things were not going well for David. He had been forced to leave his palace as his own son, Absalom, declared himself to be king. Still David trusted God to bring him through this and rejoiced in all that God had done. David praises God, declaring God's love is better than his life. Nothing else mattered.

Father, thank You for the example of David's unwavering trust in You. I rejoice that You are with me every step I take. Nothing else matters but Your love for me.

– Judy Crafton



Walking Exercise:

Today, try an experiment. Walk without your water bottle. Purposefully make yourself thirsty (within reason). Then reread this Psalm.

Psalm 65 - Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020

“Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple” (v. 1).

As I read the above verse, I’m left with some questions. Am I chosen to live in God’s courts? How does his holy temple have an effect on my life today? Do I get to experience these benefits of his house? It seems to be a very selective and intimate invitation, one that I’m not convinced applies to me. I’m glad I kept reading.

“You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds, God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas” (v. 5).

“The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy” (v. 8).

Perhaps I am one of the blessed to be brought into his courts; and without a doubt the message of hope extending to all the ends of the earth does reach your and my world. This is good news in times of discouragement, disappointment, or the mundane.

In the last year of living in Columbia City, Hannah and I have been privileged like many of you to experience some beautiful sunrises where the sun fills the sky/ clouds with color as it comes over the Washington hills and mountains. In almost a testimony of the hope God gives, David says the whole earth is filled with awe at His wonders. From rising to setting, He calls forth songs of joy. While mornings are not particularly my favorite time of day, God uses this time to show off and communicate his message of hope.

I would encourage you to gaze at the beauty of the sun rising or setting, and look for hope in those moments. He is an awesome God who allows us to experience his beauty and sovereignty, even in our little corner of the earth.

– Christopher Ward



Walking Exercise:

Reread verse 8 How does your morning (or evening walk) promote songs of joy? As you walk, take note of the things that promote joy.

Psalm 68 - Sunday, Nov. 29, 2020

Absolute. Unique. Shared. All three words describe the power of our God.

Absolute: *“When you, God, went out before your people . . . the earth shook the heavens poured down rain” (vs. 7-8).*

Unique: *“Our God is a God who saves” (vs. 20).*

Shared: *“The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people” (vs 35).*

As a child, I remember thinking my parents could do anything. But as I matured, I recognized they, too, were only human. As a teen, I remember thinking if I just had a car, I could win the girl. But reality proved healthy relationships are way more complicated. As a young adult, I remember thinking success was mine if I could just land the right job. But as I grew, I began to realize who I am is of much greater importance than what I do.

Strange how my understanding and definition of power changed over the years. And throughout this process, our all-powerful Father lovingly watched my perceptions develop. Patiently, He has waited as I learned He is the “all AM” while I’m the “am not.”

No wonder David ends his Psalm telling us not to praise our own power, but to sing about God’s. Not to proclaim our own strength, but to praise the One who is and always will be in control.

Absolute, Unique, Shared . . . may we experience God’s amazing power today.

- Randy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

This Psalm describes the power of our God. On your walk today, where is it the easiest to see His power?

Psalm 69 - Monday, Nov. 30, 2020

David is really, really upset! He feels hated and alone. While he admits guilt for “his folly” before God, he thinks that he is being held accountable by people around him for additional wrongs that he has not committed. He is estranged from his family. His attempts to show restitution through weeping, fasting, and wearing sackcloth are all being viewed with scorn, insults, and derision. At this point he is so far in over his head that he feels like he is drowning. He has called out for help so much that he is worn out.

In his despair David finally calls out to the Lord. The extended prayer that follows again gives insight into David’s close relationship with the Heavenly Father in its openness and honesty. David shares with the Lord his dire need for rescue and redemption. But he also shares both his pain as well as his fury with how he has been treated. David took it all to God in prayer.

Daily life is filled with its ups and downs. For the most part we go through life without experiencing anything like David has in these verses. However, God is there for us all the time, no matter what the situation. While it may not have occurred to you to take your anger and frustration arising from some situation to God, let this be an example of how David did just that. God wants a rich relationship with each one of us and he will help you get back to an attitude of love and unity if you just call out to him for help.

– Todd Martin



Walking Exercise:

Hope is found in God’s goodness - that’s one of the messages of this Psalm. On your walk - count the evidences you see of God’s goodness. How many can you count?

Psalm 86 - Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2020

Theme: God is faithful during difficult times.

This Psalm of David gives me great inspiration as I deal with ALS. We are all tested but in different ways. Mine is ALS. It is a battle I do not want to fight, but I know that God is in control and His plan for my life is perfect. I will praise Him forever and ultimately there will be no more disease or pain. ALS is temporary, but God and my faith in Him is for eternity.

I want to start with the best part, verses 14-17, and let us substitute ALS for people!

14 O God, ALS has risen up against me;

It is trying to kill me.

And you mean nothing to ALS!

15 But you O Lord are a merciful and gracious God,

Full of unfailing love and truth.

16 Look down and have mercy on me.

Give strength to your servant;

Yes, save me for I am your servant.

17 Send me a sign of your favor.

Then ALS and the devil will be put to shame,

For you, O Lord, help and comfort me.

Yes, ALS is here to kill me, but God is keeping me strong and protecting me from the evil one whose efforts are to separate me from my faith. Perhaps this is God's way of refining me and bringing me closer to the person He wants me to be. That is fine with me because I need refining. The bottom line is this - whatever the reason, even if it is just the fact that we live in a broken world, I know that He is good and ALS is happening to me and my family for a reason.

Now I want to look at verses 1-13. Twice we are told to pray "constantly" (vs.3 and 13) because our lives and our happiness (v.4) depend on His goodness and unfailing love. Verse 7 tells us to step up our prayers "whenever trouble strikes".

This is where it gets interesting. I am learning that I must ask with a clean and honest heart, and it is only through my relationship with Him, that I can resist sin and prevent myself from falling back into my old ways of thinking.

Sometimes God, through His word, speaks to me directly, but more often He is the guardrail that helps me steer correctly through temptations and doubts. Some obstacles are more difficult than others and prayer and scripture reading give us “power steering”. Whether God rescues me or allows me to bear the pain so he can be glorified, He is like a parent running alongside me just after taking the training wheels off my bike.

– Gary Garner



Walking Exercise:

“Teach me your way, Lord.” On your walk, imagine you were guiding someone else. How would you teach them your way? How is God teaching you?

Psalm 95 - Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2020

The Problem of Praise

It's only natural . . . When you see a comet streak across the night sky, it's only natural to stare and hope for more. When you see the first flower of spring, it's only natural to lean in and breathe - expecting the fragrance of freshness. When your favorite team misses the last-minute field goal, it's only natural to let out a groan. When you hold an infant in your arms, it's only natural to smile and to be filled with hope, joy, and wonder. When you see your daughter in her wedding gown, it's only natural to wonder where the time went.

Likewise, when you stand on a mountain peak or place your foot in the ocean, it's only natural to bow down in worship; to shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation; to pour out expressions of thankfulness; and to extol Him with music and song.

You can't stop it . . . it's only natural.

It's all natural, that is, if we take the time to really see the mountains and experience the wonder of the oceans. So maybe that's the issue . . . maybe I don't have a "praise problem," I have a vision problem.

I only see me. Me, me, me.
My space, my time, my life, my world.

Today Lord, may I be filled with You, You, You.
Your dreams, Your hopes, and Your agenda.

Then, it will be only natural, my praise will flow.

-Randy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

Mountains and seas reminded David of God's power and greatness. On your walk, what in God's creation do you see that prompts thanksgiving?

Psalm 103 - Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020

“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits...” Psalm 103: 1-2 KJV

In Psalm 103, God is known as the one who forgives, heals, redeems, loves, and satisfies. All of these elements of his character are listed as reasons for blessing or praising His name. The psalmist goes on to explain who God is and what He has done. As I read this, I find myself remembering how the Lord has worked in my life through some painful and challenging times. In gratitude, I’m led to praise God as David did.

Although we don’t know at what time period in David’s life this was written, we know he faced many difficulties throughout his years that we will likely never experience. I find it hard to think of coming to God in prayer without my “To Do” list of things I want fixed. Clearly David had plenty of reasons to ask for help, but in this prayer song, we see his focus driven upward instead of inward.

In response to who God is and all that He has done, we can’t help but concur that He is worthy of all the praise we can give him. As we look up, we find the goodness of God and of life.

How do you need to re-adjust your prayer time with God?
Spend time in praise and thanksgiving today without asking God for anything.

Prayer: Lord, there are 10,000 reasons for our hearts to sing. Today we explode with praise for all you have done for us. Lord, we worship your holy name.

– Joyce Pereira



Walking Exercise:

On your walk today, look to the sky. “As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love . . .” (vs. 11). Thank him today for His abundant grace.

Psalm 105 - Friday, Dec. 4, 2020

Maybe you've been at the airport and witnessed a thing of genuine beauty.

A soldier's tour of duty has ended. His family and friends are huddled near the exit. They lift high their sign, "Welcome Home," hoping it will convey their love to the son, husband, or dad who makes his way off the plane. The promise to return home was kept.

Service rendered. Promise kept. Grateful reception.

How many promises has God made you that He's kept? Psalm 105 records the history of His people – it's filled with promises He made and fulfilled. He's the hero of the story. He protects, He rescues, He restores his people over and over again.

If you were writing a history of your personal walk with God, what things would you list? What incredible things would you mention? What commitments has he completed? What service has He rendered? What promises has He kept?

Anxiously, we wait for our Savior's return. When he does, it will be a service rendered, a promise kept, a grateful reception.

– Randy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

On your walk, "remember the wonders he has done" in your life. Specifically, identify the promises He has made that you've seen fulfilled.

Psalm 106 - Saturday, Dec. 5, 2020

When I was 21 years old and just graduated from junior college, I took a short-term job in Washington, D.C. It paid a large amount of money, most of which was not taxable. Coming from a time with very limited money (for three months in college I survived on spaghetti and ketchup, ramen really wasn't on the scene yet), and moving from southern Idaho to the D.C. area, I enjoyed myself. I purchased expensive toys, and as I had my car, I went to lots of places. I thoroughly enjoyed all the live music opportunities, as well as the shops, museums and art galleries. I lived in the second-most exclusive short-term apartment complex in the area, with many high-ranking military, political, and business people. I ate at nice restaurants most nights. But after just a few months, I found I wasn't happy. Even with all the "fun" and "goodies," and working in a powerful place with a high-profile job, it wasn't enough. I am so thankful to have learned at such an early age money does not bring happiness! Making a lot of money has not been a goal in my life since that time.

Psalm 106 has a lot of "meat" in it for me. God rescues. People forget and turn away. God gets their attention, and remains faithful. People "grumble" (attitude), and then they defile themselves (action), and God holds them accountable. But he remains faithful, calling them (us) back. Verses 35-36 states, "but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them." (NIV)

I continue to struggle with materialism. I like nice, shiny things. I am surrounded by a culture pushing that at me, enticing me to get "more" or "better." And yet, there is the still, small voice telling me there is another way. A better way. Calling me to "relationship" instead of "stuff."

As verse 47 says, "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise."

- Steve Washburn



Walking Exercise:

Today's Psalm paints the vivid contrast of Lord's faithfulness and the lack of it from His people. As you walk, look for the contrasts between things people have built and what God has made. What does it prompt in you?

Psalm 110 - Sunday, Dec. 6, 2020

It is possible to be two things at once.

I can be:

- a husband and a father
- a student and a teacher
- even a driver and a passenger (although my wife will tell you I'm a much better driver than I am a passenger).

But this Psalm discusses two natures of Christ that normally don't go together: Priest and King. The role of the Priest was to fill the gap between the people and God by offering sacrifices. They often spoke to the King on behalf of God.

Kings, on the other hand, had authority to rule the people. They needed God if they were to serve the people well and the Priest was advisor.

But putting the two under one was seldom done. In fact, when Samuel assumed he had the authority to serve in both roles, his leadership was doomed (1 Samuel 15). It's possible that some in David's audience were alive when Samuel took this action and, as such, this Psalm would have been puzzling.

Perhaps it was for this reason that David, when he mentioned this dual role, referred the people not to Samuel, but to the rather obscure Melchizedek (Genesis 14). He was both the King and Priest who blessed Abraham.

David is professing the Messiah would be like Melchizedek – he would have the authority of a King and the role of a priest. But our King and Priest, Jesus, not only offered a sacrifice, He was the sacrifice. And by so doing, placed all things under his feet, even death itself. Praise God for what He has done!

- Randy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

Without God's rule, the world would be in chaos. As you walk today, take note of the evidences that demonstrate God is in control.

Psalm 124 - Monday, Dec. 7, 2020

This psalm reminds me of two things. The overwhelming power of the evil one. And the victory that God provides.

Remember the movie Matrix (1999)? The power of the matrix was the power it had over the people – humans could not even recognize that they were living in a distorted reality and what they were living in was not real. They could not recognize it because they were living in it.

Our reality is that God's people are under attack from God's enemy, Satan. Scripture says tells us that the world is his dominion and, as such, we are living in enemy territory. It also tells us that Satan knows how to mess with our heads, giving us a tangled matrix of distorted thoughts, feelings, and perceptions so that we will accept his lies as truth. He knows how to pour cold water on our hopes and knows how to sow discouragement and discord in otherwise loving relationships. He is a master at burying land mines under us that without God's help we often do not recognize them because they are camouflaged and the ground we walk on feels so familiar and "normal." This must delight Satan for he undoubtedly prefers for us to not recognize his identity, his power, and his methods as he prowls around, seeking whom he can devour! Like the psalmist David says, he would love nothing more than to claim victory over us and to bring malevolent, powerful, destructive waves crashing down to destroy our life, hope and righteousness!

What's the second reminder from this psalm? That God is always present. He is our strength, and over and over again He delivers us from Satan's attempts to overthrow us. God knows Satan's schemes and is waiting for us so that He can gently guide us through enemy territory to safe ground where there are no land mines, disasters or warped distortions of good. We would be quickly overcome and utterly lost but for the grace of God and His presence in our lives. Instead, we can claim victory from the evil one through Jesus Christ who is ALWAYS on our side, even when we don't recognize where we are, who the enemy is, and the weapons he is attempting to use against us. Time and time again, had the Lord God not been on our side, we would have ended up engulfed and defeated.

Praise the Lord for hearing our cries for help and for His promise of deliverance from Satan who wishes us nothing but harm.

Prayer: Lord thank you for your constant presence and protection. Thank you for delivering me from Satan's attempts to mess with my head and my heart. Give me wisdom through your Spirit to recognize the enemy and to thwart his attacks. Strengthen my faith and my resolve. Give me courage to face the challenges you want me to grow in today, Lord. Amen.

- Kathy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

“If the Lord hand not been on our side . . .” As you walk today, try to imagine how a land, a family, or an individual might look like without His intervention. Pray for those you walk by that may not know Him.

Psalm 131 - Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2020

Do you remember the children's story, "Alice in Wonderland" and how she was either too big or too small for the place she was in? As a result, she was constantly disoriented. Psalms 131 is a quiet psalm that encourages us to become just the right size. It was written as a reminder for the Old Testament believers who sang it to each other on their way up to the temple to worship God.

Psalms 131 was written by King David. No doubt, there was a lot of noise in David's real life that competed with maintaining a quiet and contented soul. He was a powerful leader and in charge of running a vast kingdom. No doubt he had a very busy daily schedule and was responsible for a magnitude of responsibilities, people and challenges. He must have had an extensive To-Do list – after all, he was the king! Real life could have easily led him to feelings of pride, dissatisfaction, and ambition. And yet, he chose to have a humble, childlike trust in God to take care of matters that are "above his pay scale." He describes the experience of his soul being quiet, still, composed and at peace on the inside. Like a weaned child sitting contentedly on the lap of its mother. His quieting of the soul was a deliberate and intentional act and his intentional focus of quieting down and "getting to the right size" happened in the middle of noisy, real life responsibilities.

We can get so used to be out-sized and internally restless that it seems natural and normal to stay that way. However, our internal restlessness should instead tip us off that our soul state is not as it should be.

How can you quiet yourself down – tune out the noise and tune in to the still, small voice of God? Stop and listen. Humble yourself and choose to settle into and accept your life like a weaned child. He is leading you by the hand to that place of quiet stillness where He is the center and continuously gives you all that you need. When you pursue what you are called to pursue, you will have peace. When you go after the right things, you will find what you are looking for. You will become just the right size. No pride, no haughtiness, no noise.

Prayer for today: Lord give me the grace to accept that I will not get everything done today, and that I will disappoint people. May I rest in You and You alone, not because of my accomplishments or achievements or goals or plans but because you are trustworthy. You are God and I am not. You have provided me with everything I need for today. Teach me how to be quiet and to rest in you for your ways and your plans are too marvelous for me to understand. Surround me with your people who can remind me of your truths and speak out to me about my life. Amen.

– Kathy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

As you walk today, try to walk with child-like wonder. What do they notice? What marvels do they see? What does it mean to be a child of God?

Psalm 138 - Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2020

“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me;” Psalm 138:8

We rise every morning with every choice before us. Many of us start the day praising the Lord before we even open our eyes. Most of us have some routine we rely on to get us going and out of the door. But, regardless of how we start, every possibility is available. If we have any habit or routine, it should be to let God “perfect” that which concerns us.

My wife and I were once on a trip through Montana and Wyoming. Our campsite for the night was very far from everywhere, as the saying goes. The next morning as we started out we headed to the fuel station three miles back up the road. To our surprise the station did not carry diesel. Trusting God, we started down the interstate highway towing a thirty-five foot trailer. We have been on long trips many times and know that there are often long distances between fuel stops. But we were unprepared for a gap of one hundred and thirty plus miles. We trusted our Lord for a good outcome and continued on.

Later, as we started down the ramp off the freeway, it seemed as if everything would be alright. However, when the traffic light changed and we started across the intersection to the truck stop, the truck died. Our immediate goal was so close but unreachable. People passed by, even a policeman. Then, out of nowhere, a man with a tow truck offered to tow us off the road. He was traveling through from out of state. We thanked God, so did the tow truck driver.

Naturally, the truck would not start, so we got fuel at the station we were parked behind. We called the dealer who sold us the truck for priming instructions but were still unable to start the truck. Providentially, we happened to be next door to a diesel engine shop. The mechanic from the shop agreed to come and help. Again, we praised God.

When we got the truck running without any problem (another praise) and filled up with fuel, we praised God for His care for us. God’s plan for us is perfect. He may allow us travail for our strengthening, or it may be for us to share with others. Yet, we are always to praise Him with our whole heart for He will perfect that which concerns us. – Mike Crafton



Walking Exercise:

“He takes note of the humble . . .” On your walk, notice the “little things” that God cares for. What do you see?

Psalm 139 - Thursday, Dec. 10, 2020

Too Much, but Not Enough

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

To tell you the truth, I'm a bit shocked by how King David concludes Psalm 139. After he is astounded at the immensity of God's greatness and at how completely God knows him (vs 1-18), he then prays for God to know him even *more deeply!* Whoa.

It brings to mind the time I went backpacking in the high Sierras as a teen. The beauty was simply overwhelming. Cresting a high ridge brought me to sights that remain vivid in my memory – many years later! I could scarcely take in some of the vistas ... and yet I came home *wanting even more.*

Could that be similar to how David (*who felt that knowing God was "too wonderful for me ... too lofty to attain"*) was still asking for God to know him more fully? (Ps 139:6)

His prayer surprises me like a stunning mountain vista ... and besides the beauty, it is incredibly courageous! He asks God not only to search his heart, but to "see if there is any offensive way in me" (vs 24). He actually wants God to point out whatever He might find displeasing in his soul. What kind of heart asks for that kind of honest diagnosis?

Though David is blown away at the Glory and Grandeur of God, he still wants to keep growing, to keep pleasing the Heart of God – and he's willing to hear what God sees in him.

"Dear Father, we so need a Heart like David's!" - David Pereira



Walking Exercise:

On your walk, choose an object off in the distance (like a house or tree). What can you tell about it? While it is still in the distance, what details can you discern? God knows our hidden thoughts from afar (v. 2). What does this evoke in you?

Psalm 144 - Friday, Dec. 11, 2020

Recipe for Rope Danglers

Some stories relate events from the past. Others focus on the future. This Psalm relates both but focuses on the here and now. *“Part the heavens, Lord, and come down”* (v. 5). David is ready for things to change. The time for training is over (vv. 1-4). And if the Lord changes things, David can readily see how the future would be impacted (vv. 12-15). But the focus is on the present. *“Now, Lord . . . reach down and rescue me”* (v. 7).

Ever been there? Bills overdue? Illness zapped your strength? Feel like you’re at the end of an unraveling rope? David could relate.

We’re not sure what prompted David to write such a Psalm. Nor are we sure how God responded. Sometimes God gives us the strength to endure our challenges instead of rescuing us from them. But what is clear is the confidence of David’s heart.

David, even in the midst of his trial, believed God was on his side. This was the truth that many of David’s peers did not understand nor get. Some advised, *“David, Saul treats you like his enemy – you should treat him the same!”* Others cautioned, *“Absalom, your son is leading a revolt against you – you cannot spare him.”*

But David trusted God to be His protector. He expected the heavens to part and the powerful Almighty to break through. And while he waited for that to happen, he did at least two things – both at the same time:

1. He begged for God to break through (vs 7).
2. He praised the One who delivered him (vs 10).

Hmm...that’s not a bad recipe for those dangle from an unraveling rope. What do you think?

- Randy Thomas



Walking Exercise:

“Part the heavens and come down” (vs 5). On your walk, imagine the Lord did just that. What would you do? What would you say? What would you feel?

Psalm 145 - Saturday, Dec. 12, 2020

Psalm 145:4-5 & 21 (NIV)

4. One generation will commend your works to another;
They will tell of your mighty acts.
5. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty,
And I will meditate on your wonderful works.
21. My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord.

Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.

It has always been interesting to me what memories people, including myself, have from childhood. My husband, John, remembers his grandfather's mealtime prayer from when he was growing up. It wasn't until years later that he discovered his grandfather had been praying Psalm 145:15-16 (KJV).

15. The eyes of all wait upon thee;
and thou givest them their meat in due season.
16. Thou openest thine hand,
and satisfied the desire of every living thing.

Psalm 145 is a Psalm of Praise of David's. Throughout this psalm we are reminded that one generation is to pass the message of God's wonders on to the next generation (v. 4-5). John's grandfather was doing that even before John was aware that he was being taught about God's love and care for him.

The entire Psalm 145 is a very powerful, humbling, and uplifting psalm to pray to the Lord. The psalm ends with verse 21 where we are again reminded to speak of our praise of the Lord and tell others, including the next generations, of the greatness of God. "My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name forever and ever." Psalm 145:21 (NIV)

Today have you identified opportunities to encourage others, including the next generations, through sharing the majesty, splendor, and greatness of God? Ask God for awareness.

"Most Holy God, we thank you for the gift of your Word which helps us to understand and know you more. Help each of us to see opportunities to encourage others, show your love, and tell of your greatness, compassion, faithfulness, and righteousness to our generation and the next."

- Diane Warneke



Walking Exercise:

On your walk, purposefully use your words to speak aloud God's goodness. Look for someone to encourage. Follow verse 21, "My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord."