

April 1 – Decision to Rest

**Today's reading: Psalms 1-5**

*“I lie down and sleep;  
I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.  
I will not fear though tens of thousands  
assail me on every side” - Psalms 3:5-6.*

When you read the psalms in sequential order, you begin to realize that there was a crisis causing the writers to write and the editors to order the psalms as they did. In Psalm 3, we see that King David and the monarchy were in danger when David was badly outnumbered while fleeing from his rebel son, Absalom. Yet in the midst of it all, David found time to write and pray, and to make his affirmations of trust and hope in God. When David said he could sleep and not fear when thousands came against him, he wasn't exaggerating. If David could create, write, pray, trust and sleep in the midst of his life's problems, can you do the same in yours? All those actions were decisions within his power to make, and he followed through with the evidence of his obedience. This is reminiscent of the peace Jesus had in the midst of His storm: “The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Master, Master, we're going to drown!' He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm” (Luke 8:24). Have you made the decision to be at rest, even though there is turmoil all around you? Is your mind at peace even though war is raging all around you? What steps can you take to find and keep that peace? *Lord, I am not at peace because I have not surrendered my life to You. I still want to take back control, and worry and fret over the things that are going on around me. I trust You today to handle the things I cannot control.*

April 2 – Keeping a Journal

**Today's reading: Psalms 6-10**

*“When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars,  
which you have set in place,  
what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?” - Psalm 8:3-4.*

David took time to reflect and think, and when he did, he received insight into God, man, and the relationship between the two. Perhaps David did this when he was a shepherd boy, or maybe while he was king, or waiting to become one. Whenever it happened, David spent reflective time and then wrote about his conclusions. It is interesting how often in the Bible the Lord directed people to write things down. Here is one such directive: “Appoint three men from each tribe. I will send them out to make a survey of the land and to write a description of it, according to the inheritance of each. Then they will return to me” (Joshua 18:4). Do you have a journal? Do you faithfully use it? What can you do to help carve out some thinking, reflecting and journaling

time? Do you see the benefit of doing so? If not, then you will probably not make an effort to do more of it.

April 3 – Safety

**Today's reading: Psalms 11-15**

*“You, Lord, will keep the needy safe  
and will protect us forever from the wicked,  
who freely strut about  
when what is vile is honored by the human race” - Psalm 12:7-8.*

Today's passage contains a vivid description of modern society: the evil strut about freely because what is vile is honored. The problem is that as they strut, they persecute and dishonor those who walk in righteousness. The promise in the verse, however, provides comfort: The Lord always protects His people in the midst of the madness. Jesus reiterated this promise when He said: “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one” (John 17:4-5). Are you nervous over the state of the world? Has it caused you to alter your lifestyle, or do you just keep your fear silently in your heart, afraid when you step out of the comfort zone you know? The good news is that God is watching and has promised to protect you. What will you do differently now that you are reminded of that truth?

April 4 – Your Role

**Today's reading: Psalms 16-20**

*“To the faithful you show yourself faithful,  
to the blameless you show yourself blameless,  
to the pure you show yourself pure,  
but to the devious you show yourself shrewd.  
You save the humble  
but bring low those whose eyes are haughty” - Psalm 18:7-9.*

In a sense, you help direct how God responds to you by first responding to Him in the similar manner. If you are faithful, God shows Himself faithful. If you are blameless, He is blameless. If you are devious, He responds as shrewd. If you are humble, He saves you. If you are proud, He brings you low. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but only points out the role you have in your relationship with Him. Therefore, if you are not happy with how God is revealing Himself to you, then perhaps the problem rests with you. Are you experiencing lack? Then perhaps you are not being generous. Are your prayers not being answered? Then maybe you are not listening to God first and foremost, so He is not listening to you. Take some time today and reflect on the

truth in this passage, and then do some serious self-evaluation to see if you are contributing to your current state of a less-than-satisfactory relationship with the Lord in any area of life.

April 5 – God’s Perspective

**Today's reading: Psalms 21-25**

*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?  
My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest” - Psalm 22:1-2.*

These verses are probably familiar because Jesus uttered these words while dying on the cross. Jesus recited the first verse and any Jew listening would have recognized that this was a cry of David in which he reiterated his confidence that he would survive his trials and praise the Lord. It is permissible to be honest with the Lord and to pour your heart out to Him. The purpose, however, is not to stay in your perspective as you cry out, but to obtain God's perspective concerning your situation, and then to reiterate your hope in Him. Perhaps it would be good for you to go to the account of Jesus' death during which He uttered this phrase in Matthew 27, and be challenged to do what the writer of Hebrews instructed you to do:

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? . . . Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees (Hebrews 12:4-5, 12).

April 6 – Integrity

**Today's reading: Psalms 26-30**

*“Test me, Lord, and try me,  
examine my heart and my mind;  
for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love  
and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness” - Psalm 26:2-3.*

David prayed and asked the Lord to scrutinize his mind and heart to make sure it was in compliance with what God required. David was making sure his integrity was intact - that he was being who he claimed to be and not just a talker. Talk is cheap and some believe if they are sincere when they say something then they have done what God wanted, even if they don't follow through. That was not good enough for David and it should not be for you either. Peter and the disciples did this very thing when they said to Jesus, “But Peter declared, ‘Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.’ And all the other disciples said the same” (Matthew 26:35). A few hours later, they did indeed betray the Lord in spite of their bold declaration. Are you walking in integrity? Do you have the goods to back up what you say you are and promise

you will do? Where are you allowing sincerity and good intentions to override your need to actually follow through?

April 7 – In the Battle

**Today's reading: Psalms 31-35**

*“The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them;  
he delivers them from all their troubles” - Psalm 34:17.*

It seems like the psalmists were constantly in a lot of trouble, not always of his own doing. In today's verse, the writer penned a truth that was not just relevant in his life but also in the life of all the saints: they cry out, God hears and delivers them. The challenge is that the deliverance is often *through* the trouble and not *out* of the trouble. This is further explained in Hebrews 11:34b: “. . . whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in the battle, routing foreign armies.” People were not spared *from* battle but were strengthened *in* the battle. Is your expectation that God will keep you from trouble? Do you find God instead giving you strength for and in the battle? Can you make peace with the fact that this is how God operates? Are you in a battle right now? Then have faith that God will deliver you as you fight your way through.

April 8 – Speak Up

**Today's reading: Psalm 36-40**

*“So I remained utterly silent,  
not even saying anything good.  
But my anguish increased;  
my heart grew hot within me.  
While I meditated, the fire burned;  
then I spoke with my tongue” - Psalm 39:2-3.*

There are times you should remain silent, but only if you have nothing to say. If you have something to say that can help others and don't say it, then you are being irresponsible. Usually fear is the culprit, keeping you from saying something that may offend or upset another person. Your words can cause turmoil, but they can also build others up, or prevent someone from going down on a wrong path or having a bad attitude. Jeremiah faced the same dilemma when he said, “But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name, his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot’” (Jeremiah 20:9). Where have you been silent, but your heart is burning within you with a conviction that you need to speak up and speak out? What is the cost to you and others for your silence? What can you do to change the situation?

April 9 – Your Creativity

**Today's reading: Psalms 41-45**

*“My heart is stirred by a noble theme  
as I recite my verses for the king;  
my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer” - Psalm 45:1.*

Many people don't write or create more often because they cannot picture themselves sitting at a computer, writing for hours at a time. Yet today's verse sets them free to recite rather than write their stories and lessons. Paul wrote most of his letters by dictating them to someone else, only signing off in his own handwriting at the end. Luke interviewed others and compiled his gospel from their accounts. Are you among those who are fearful or hesitant to express your creative insights and ideas? Then fear no more. Find someone to whom you can dictate your concepts and ideas, and let your creativity flow! After a few hours, you will see something begin to take shape that can turn into a book project. What steps can you take to move your ideas from your heart to the place where people can enjoy and learn from them?

April 10 – Envious

**Today's reading: Psalms 46-50**

*“Do not be overawed when others grow rich,  
when the splendor of their houses increases;  
for they will take nothing with them when they die,  
their splendor will not descend with them” - Psalm 49:16-17.*

In today's world, wealth has increased at a rapid rate but so has poverty. The Internet and media shows highlight the lifestyles of the rich and famous, and it is easy to become a bit envious (or a lot envious) of those who have so much, especially when you have so much less. The psalmists today cautioned their generation against being 'overawed' when others gain much. To put things in perspective, the writers reminded the readers that the wealthy are going to die and they will take nothing with them. Jesus gave similar advice:

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done (Matthew 16:26-27).

Are you envious of the wealthy? Are your eyes set on the temporal or the eternal? Are you working to earn what will not and can not last, or are you investing in eternal things that cannot perish?

April 11 – The Blame Game

**Today's reading: Psalms 51-55**

*“For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.  
Against you, you only, have I sinned*

*and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge” - Psalm 51:3-4.*

David acknowledged that he was wrong, and had sinned against the Lord. There was no blame shifting, no victim mentality, and no rationalizing his sin - David accepted responsibility for what he had done. It is rare to hear anyone be so forthright in holding themselves accountable, for we are all like our parents, Adam and Eve, who played the blame game from the beginning of their Fall: “The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’” (Genesis 3:12-13). Do you admit when you are wrong? When you are, do you say, "I'm sorry" or "I'm sorry, *but . . .*" and then go on to list all the reasons why it wasn't *really* your fault? Is there something for which you need to apologize and ask forgiveness without trying to justify or rationalize what you did?

April 12 – Sing and Make Music

**Today's reading: Psalms 56-60**

*“My heart, O God, is steadfast,  
my heart is steadfast;  
I will sing and make music.  
Awake, my soul!  
Awake, harp and lyre!  
I will awaken the dawn” - Psalm 57:7-8.*

These verses are not particularly inspirational, and represent what one would expect from a book that emphasizes praise and worship. Yet the heading of the psalm makes these verses remarkable. David penned them while he was hiding in a cave when Saul was searching to destroy him! In the midst of the pressure and tension, David made a commitment to sing and make music. He was not going to allow the circumstances to dictate his attitude; instead, he was going to determine what kind of attitude he would have, and then follow through on his commitment. Paul imitated this response to adversity in his own ministry experience:

After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them (Acts 16:23-25).

Have you allowed your life situation to affect your praise and worship? Are you part of a local church? Are you following through on your commitments to serve the Lord in spite of any setbacks you may have experienced?

April 13 – Kingdom Rule

**Today's reading: Psalms 61-65**

*"Truly my soul finds rest in God;  
my salvation comes from him.  
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;  
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken" - Psalm 62:1-2.*

David wrote this in a time when he was under assault, which happened to him quite often in his role as warrior king. David came to many conclusions during those dangerous times. First, his true rest was not in escape but in the Lord. Second, his salvation came from God and not his military prowess. Third, God was his fortress, not those he could build or design with his military experience. Armed with those conclusions, David proclaimed that he would *never* be shaken. This reminds me of what is written in Hebrews: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire'" (Hebrews 12:28-29). Have you thought out what attitude you will have when things are tough? If you are shaken, then perhaps you are not living under God's kingdom rule as you should? If you don't have rest, maybe your thinking is off and this is causing you to seek refuge in something or someone other than God?

April 14 – Remember

**Today's reading: Psalms 66-70**

*"He turned the sea into dry land,  
they passed through the waters on foot—  
come, let us rejoice in him" - Psalm 66:6.*

When the psalmist wrote this psalm, Israel was scattered and in exile. As he reflected on their condition, he decided to remember the past works of God to help Israel rejoice in where they were. You would do well to do the same thing. When you reflect on God's past goodness and mercy, it encourages you and gives you hope that God will once again move miraculously on your behalf. In the book of Deuteronomy, the Lord commanded Israel to "remember" what He had done 16 times, and here is one example: "Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you" (Deuteronomy 32:7). Spend some time today remembering what God has done for you. Talk about it, write about it, tell others about it. Allow the past to lift your spirits today as you reflect on memories of God's goodness.

April 15 – The Will of God

**Today's reading: Psalms 71-75**

*"You guide me with your counsel,  
and afterward you will take me into glory" - Psalm 73:24.*

God is a God of guidance. If He wants you to do His will - and of course He does - then He must reveal to you what His will is. God is a great communicator and does not lack the means to reveal Himself to you. He can use His word, other people, or life's circumstances. The key to understanding God's will is committing to do it, whatever it is, *before* you know what it is. In other words, you surrender your "veto power" and say 'yes,' trusting that whatever He shows you is good and in your best interests. This principle is found in John 7:17 when Jesus answered the question, "How do we know if you [Jesus] are from God? [Jesus answered] 'Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.'" Are you struggling with the will of God as you consider a certain issue or decision? Have you made a commitment to do it before you know what the 'it' is? Do you believe that God will make it clear? *Lord, I want and need to know Your will for my life. I ask You today to reveal it to me, and I trust that You not only hear me but will also answer. I have tuned my heart to hear, and will not allow fear or doubt to hinder hearing Your response!*

April 16 – Worry

**Today's reading: Psalms 76-80**

*"In spite of all this, they kept on sinning;  
in spite of his wonders, they did not believe" - Psalm 78:32.*

Israel saw many miracles as they left Egypt to enter the Promised Land. Yet each time they confronted a crisis, they had short-term memory loss and panicked, challenging the Lord to prove Himself again and again. They did not put their trust in Him and worried that they would die in the Wilderness. You and I can have the same problem, for even though we have seen God do great things, we also can worry and fret over our current situation. We have faith that God raises the dead, yet we also have amnesia concerning God's goodness and freak out over a bad doctor's report or a job loss. Jesus taught His disciples not to worry in His first sermon: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?" (Matthew 6:25). If He were preaching today, He would add transportation and health care to the no-worry list. Are you a worrier? Do you see that worry is not just a bad habit, but a sinful habit? Perhaps today is a good day to begin living a worry-free life? *Father, I trust You. I acknowledge that worry and fear have often robbed me of the joy You want me to have as I trust You for my daily provision and protection. You are a good Provider, and I ask your forgiveness for my anxiety, and I renew my faith today in You.*

April 17 – Price of Disobedience

**Today's reading: Psalms 81-85**

*"If my people would only listen to me,  
if Israel would only follow my ways,  
how quickly I would subdue their enemies  
and turn my hand against their foes!" - Psalm 81:13-14.*

Occasionally in the Psalms, it is the Lord speaking and not the psalmists themselves. In this passage, the Lord laments His people's disobedience, reiterating His desire to help and deliver them if they would only listen to His voice. He had given them over to their stiff-necked ways, however, and they were not about to repent and turn to Him. There is always a price to pay for disobedience. You must always ask yourself if some of your dilemmas are a result of your own disobedience in some area of life. What's more, some of what you have considered spiritual warfare may not be that at all, and your obedience could bring about God's swift intervention on your behalf. Are you struggling financially? Relationally? Occupationally? Then take a close look today, with God's help, and see if you can engage God's quick help by obeying His word and will for your life in that particular area.

April 18 – Walk in the Light

**Today's reading: Psalms 86-90**

*“Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,  
who walk in the light of your presence, Lord” - Psalm 89:15.*

The word *acclaim* is not often used as a verb, but it means “to praise enthusiastically and often publicly.” What's more, the people who acclaim the Lord and who walk in the light of His presence are called blessed. What does it mean to walk in God's light? John explained it in his epistle when he wrote:

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:5b-9).

Are you walking in the light by confessing your sins? Do you deny it when you are wrong or make excuses just like Adam and Eve did when they sinned? Or do you accept responsibility for your shortcomings? If you do, then the Bible says you are a blessed person!

April 19 – Praise and Worship

**Today's reading: Psalms 91-95**

*“Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;  
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.  
Let us come before him with thanksgiving  
and extol him with music and song” - Psalm 95:1-2.*

There is certainly nothing wrong with private devotionals in which you spend time worshiping and praising the Lord. The context of this passage, however, is for “us” to sing for joy, and that means a group of people worshiping in a corporate setting. Jesus gave His life for the church; it

is the apple of His eye. If Jesus felt church was that important, you should too. And part of the dynamic of gathering is to experience the combined singing, clapping and joy of many voices joined together in one accord. Paul instructed the church with these words: “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Colossians 3:16). Are you part of a worshiping local congregation? Do you attend regularly and make your gifts available to the leadership and members? Do you actively worship when you do attend, putting aside all worry and distractions to joyfully join your voice with others?

April 20 – The Kingdom

**Today's reading: Psalms 96-100**

*“Say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns.’  
The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;  
he will judge the peoples with equity” - Psalm 96:10.*

The redeemed have credibility when they say to the unredeemed, “The Lord reigns,” only when He truly reigns in the lives of His people. When Jesus started His ministry, He preached this message: “‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’” (Mark 1:15). Jesus came preaching the Kingdom and He expects you and I to do the same thing. That means that God wants to establish His government in your life, in the life of the Church and then in every ethnic group on earth. Are you a ‘Kingdom person’? Have you accepted Jesus as both Savior *and* Lord? Are you working to have His rule extend to every area of your life? Then are you helping to extend His rule to other areas, like where you work? Finally, are you helping others who are proclaiming the Kingdom as missionaries in other lands?

April 21 – Your Humanity

**Today's reading: Psalms 101-105**

*“As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;  
for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust” - Psalm 103:13-14.*

The Lord is comfortable with your humanity, perhaps more comfortable with it than you are. He knows you and He still wants to use you, as you are today and as you will be in the future. Some people are convinced that God must do major reconstruction on their lives before He can use them. The good news is that He is ready to use you now for His purpose. That means you can stop beating yourself up that you are not in a ‘better’ place than you are, and that you can stop delaying your purpose work until a more opportune moment. Are you hard on yourself that you aren't more spiritual, intelligent or prepared to serve the Lord? Are you even open to the fact that God wants to use you today, just as you are? What have you been putting off that you can and should embrace today as a work that God wants you to start and complete *now*?

April 22 – Hatred

**Today's reading: Psalms 106-110**

*“May his days be few;  
may another take his place of leadership.  
May his children be fatherless  
and his wife a widow” - Psalm 109:8-9.*

There is a human emotion often revealed in the psalms that is unpleasant to talk and think about, and that emotion is hatred. In today's passage, David prayed about an enemy who had opposed him. David cried out to God to do bad things to that enemy. You may recoil at such talk, but there are important things to realize here. First, David did not take revenge; he entrusted that job to the Lord. Second, David was honest with the Lord and did not gloss over his feelings, telling God what he thought God would want to hear. Third, David recognized that there was evil in the world and he went to a good God to help him deal with and sort it out. Jesus taught about how to treat your enemies when He said: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:43-44). Do you have any enemies about whom you need to talk to God? Are you masking your strong emotions, even hatred, because you don't want to admit you have them? *Lord, I admit that I am ambivalent at times about my emotional side. Help me to accept them as part of how You created me, and then help me harness them for Your service.*

April 23 – Generosity

**Today's reading: Psalms 111-115**

*“Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely,  
who conduct their affairs with justice. . . .  
They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor,  
their righteousness endures forever;  
their horn will be lifted high in honor” - Psalm 112:5, 9.*

God loves a generous person. The Bible is full of exhortations to be generous, reminding you how God rewards those who remember the poor. That assumes you know who the poor are, are in touch with their needs, and have the willingness to help. If you have time, do a search of the word *poor* in the book of Proverbs and you will see for yourself some of God's promises for the generous person. A few of my favorites are: “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done” (Proverbs 19:17) and “Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses” (Proverbs 28:27). Do you know any poor in your country or another? What do you do to help the poor? How can you increase your awareness of the needs of the poor and then increase your level of assistance? *Lord, open my eyes to the plight of the poor and show me the role You have for me to play in their relief and care.*

April 24 – Your Promises

**Today's reading: Psalms 116-120**

*“I will fulfill my vows to the Lord  
in the presence of all his people” - Psalm 116:7.*

There are times when you make commitments, only to find later that circumstances make them difficult to fulfill. Some are small things like, “I’ll call you soon” and then you don’t call the person, or “I’ll be praying for you” and then neglect to pray. Some are more major commitments such as, “I am going to pray 30 minutes every day” or “I pledged to give \$1,000 toward that church project.” Still others are songs sung in church: “I seek You only, Lord” or “You are my all,” only to find that you don’t live up to your promise to seek or remain true. Jesus told a short parable to emphasize the importance of not saying the right thing but doing it: “‘What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ ‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?’ ‘The first,’ they answered’ (Matthew 21:28-31). Are there promises you have hanging over your life that you have not fulfilled? What are you prepared to do about them? Remember, it’s better to not promise and do than to promise and not do.

April 25 – Your Helper

**Today's reading: Psalms 121-125**

*“I lift up my eyes to the mountains—  
where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
the Maker of heaven and earth” - Psalm 121:1-2.*

The psalmist reflected on where his help came from, and he concluded it came from the Lord. He looked to the mountains the Lord created and realized the same God who created them created him. The writer also knew that his help did not come from within - his intelligence, wits, skill or business acumen - but rather from an outside source. This perspective caused him to humble himself and recognize the Lord's role as his provider and helper. Do you have this same humble perspective? Have you reflected lately on how well God takes care of you? Are you humbled in the realization of how well God has taken care of you? Do you fret or rest in the truth that the same God who made everything you see also created you? If He can make and maintain the universe, then He can certainly continue to maintain you. Thank Him and rejoice in Him today!

April 26 – Your Mercy Needs

**Today's reading: Psalms 126-130**

***“Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;  
Lord, hear my voice.  
Let your ears be attentive  
to my cry for mercy” - Psalm 130:1-2.***

It is easy to cry out for mercy when you have messed up or when you are in over your head or “out of the depths” as the psalmist phrased it. Then you are acutely aware of your need for God's grace that you don't deserve. It is much more difficult to maintain your sense of need when everything is going well. Yet your need for mercy is just as great when things are going well as when they are not going so well. The wisdom writer addressed this tendency in Proverbs 18:23: “The poor plead for mercy, but the rich answer harshly.” When you are aware of your need, you tend to answer softly and tread quietly. When you don't see the need, you can become insensitive to the needs of others. Jesus guaranteed one surefire way to get the mercy you need, and that was to see your need for it and ask: “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner’” (Luke 18:13). Are you in touch with your need for mercy on a daily basis? Has that awareness affected how you pray, and how you talk or respond to others? *Father, I was not in need of mercy, I am still in need on a daily basis. I thank You for your mercy toward me, and I ask You to keep my need fresh in my mind, so I can extend mercy to others.*

April 27 – Mind Your Business

**Today's reading: Psalm 131-135**

***“My heart is not proud, Lord,  
my eyes are not haughty;  
I do not concern myself with great matters  
or things too wonderful for me” - Psalm 131:1.***

I was in Zimbabwe, about to follow a dynamic, animated and hilarious speaker at a church conference. The people were on their feet cheering him on and I was actually considering both changing my message along with my delivery when the Spirit “spoke” to me. He told me to “stay within myself,” which I did and delivered the word the Lord had given me. Today's verse urges you to “stay within yourself” as well by minding your own business and not concerning yourself with matters that don't concern you. When you are proud, you think you know more than you do and you can begin to judge others and comment on things for which you have no experience, insight and gifting. Are you staying focused on the business and people that matter most to you, or have you strayed into fretting about things that are none of your business? Do you see that this is a matter of pride and that the answer is to humble yourself and tend your own matters? *God, I humble myself today and confess that I have spoken authoritatively and harshly about things for which I have little or no understanding. Forgive me for my arrogance!*

April 28 – He Will Save You

**Today's reading: Psalms 136-140**

*“Though I walk in the midst of trouble,  
you preserve my life.  
You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes;  
with your right hand you save me” - Psalm 138:7.*

David always seemed to be in trouble, some of it through his own doing and some of it because of his God-assigned purpose. Regardless of the source of his trouble, he always looked to the Lord, crying out to Him for help and deliverance. What's more, God heard his cry for help, even when David was to blame for his troubles! God did the same for Samson, who made a mess of his life, yet prevailed one last time as his hair grew back after his encounter with Delilah: “Then Samson prayed to the Lord, ‘Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes’” (Judges 16:28). If Samson and David can cry out to God even when they failed, so can you! Don't hesitate to turn to him when you are in trouble, regardless of its source. He will come and save you!

April 29 – Entrusted to Him

**Today's reading: Psalms 141-145**

*“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,  
for I have put my trust in you.  
Show me the way I should go,  
for to you I entrust my life” - Psalm 143:8.*

People ask me if I am afraid to travel, especially if it's to a place that has been in the news due to some unrest or violence. My standard response is, “I gave my life to the Lord, I didn't loan it to him to take back whenever it was convenient. If He chooses to take me home in my bed or on a plane, that's up to Him.” My prayer has been the prayer of David in today's verse: Show me the way I should go for I trust You, Lord.” Paul understood this thinking, for he wrote to Timothy, “That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have **entrusted** to him until that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). Are you living in fear or have you entrusted your life, which includes your family, reputation, career, finances, and future, to the Lord? Are you trusting that God will show you the way you should go, and then are you proactively walking out what you think that way is?

April 30 – Leadership Perspective

**Today's reading: Psalms 146-150**

*“Do not put your trust in princes,  
in human beings, who cannot save.  
When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;  
on that very day their plans come to nothing” - Psalm 146:3-4.*

While almost all the psalms are written by leaders, the conclusion toward the end of the book is “don't put too much hope in leaders, for they are mortal and will die, just like everyone else.” There are other lessons for followers in this passage: don't put your leaders on a pedestal and don't expect them to be your ‘salvation,’ for they are only human, no matter how gifted. For leaders, the lessons in this passage are: plan for your successor, for you will not live or rule forever, and don't take yourself more seriously than you should. When the residents of Lystra tried to honor Paul and Barnabas as gods, here's how those two leaders reacted:

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: “Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them” (Acts 14:14-15).

Where do you need to adjust your thinking and expectations, whether you are a leader, follower or both?

May 1 – Contentment

**Today's reading: Psalms 1-5**

*“Many, Lord, are asking, ‘Who will bring us prosperity?’  
Let the light of your face shine on us.  
Fill my heart with joy  
when their grain and new wine abound” - Psalm 4:6-7.*

It seems that David's generation was similar to every generation, in that people were seeking prosperity by any and every means possible. David was countering their materialistic pursuits with a declaration that God was enough for him. Let's look at Eugene Peterson's translation called *The Message* to get his insight into this passage: “Why is everyone hungry for *more*? ‘More, more,’ they say. ‘More, more.’ I have God’s more-than-enough, more joy in one ordinary day than they get in all their shopping sprees.” In other words, David was content in the Lord. Paul also learned about contentment when he wrote, “But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that” (1 Timothy 6:8). Are you content with what you have or are you frantically working to get more? Are you in debt to maintain a particular lifestyle or are you living within your means, with enough to be generous toward others? Where is your source of joy - things or the Lord? *Father, I have fallen into the “more” syndrome, thinking that things will make me happy. Things have not made me happy; they have just made me hungry for more things! Forgive me for seeking satisfaction in things that will pass away. From this point on, I will seek my joy in eternal things and trust you for the material things. Amen.*

May 2 – Comfort Others

**Today's reading: Psalms 6-10**

*“All night long I flood my bed with weeping  
and drench my couch with tears.  
My eyes grow weak with sorrow;  
they fail because of all my foes” - Psalm 6:6-7.*

Obviously David was in great distress when he wrote this psalm due to circumstances that are not identified. The interesting thing is that, in the midst of his pain, David took time to write down what he was thinking and feeling, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The writing must have served as a catharsis of sorts, but then also has provided comfort for the last 3,000 years for those who identify with David's pain. This points out part of why you are going through what you are: you are to use your experience to help others. Paul understood that he suffered in part so that he could comfort others:

For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort (1 Corinthians 1:5-7).

What can you do today to comfort someone who is in pain by sharing your own testimony? Can you visit someone, share your testimony and pray for them?

May 3 – Run and Hide?

**Today's reading: Psalms 11-15**

*“In the Lord I take refuge.  
How then can you say to me:  
“Flee like a bird to your mountain.  
For look, the wicked bend their bows;  
they set their arrows against the strings  
to shoot from the shadows  
at the upright in heart.  
When the foundations are being destroyed,  
what can the righteous do?” - Psalm 11:1-3.*

David was always facing some kind of opposition and trouble, and in today's passage some of his advisers were urging him to run away and hide. There were times when David did that, but then there were times when he stood his ground, fought or faced the danger. Whatever his strategy, his life philosophy can be summed up in verse one: “In the Lord I take refuge.” The apostle Paul also had to face dangerous situations and sometimes he fled while at other times he stood his ground. Paul's philosophy can be found in Philippians 3:10-11: “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.” What is your life philosophy where danger and death are concerned? Is the Lord truly your refuge? What proof can you provide that bears out your trust in Him?

May 4 – Controlling God

**Today's reading: Psalms 16-20**

*“To the faithful you show yourself faithful,  
to the blameless you show yourself blameless,  
to the pure you show yourself pure,  
but to the devious you show yourself shrewd.  
You save the humble  
but bring low those whose eyes are haughty” - Psalm 18:25-27.*

Someone once said, “God is playing chess with man; He matches his every move.” This passage indicates there is some truth to that saying. God responds to people in the way that they respond both to Him and also to others. God is willing to show Himself faithful, blameless, pure or shrewd, and He ultimately saves those who are humble. If you are not satisfied with how God is revealing Himself to you, then you may be playing some role in the problem. The good news is that if you humble yourself, God will respond and save you from whatever you are facing: “For this is what the high and exalted One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: ‘I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite’” (Isaiah 57:15). Where can you do a better job of affecting God's response to you by repenting and changing your attitude or behavior?

May 5 – Being Taught

**Today's reading: Psalm 21-25**

*“Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Savior,  
and my hope is in you all day long” - Psalm 25:5.*

You and I need to be taught the truth and that is why we need to be part of a local church. We need to hear the Word regularly from someone who is capable of teaching God's word and God's ways with skill and accuracy. What's more, that need never ends, but the problem can be that the longer you are in a church, the easier it is to get disillusioned due to the weakness and failure of leadership and followers. When the church problems manifest themselves, it is easy to pick up and go home, sometimes staying home without either returning to church regularly or being involved when you go. The writer of Hebrews stated the problem this way: “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Who is teaching you God's word? Where are you being taught? How often? Do you know God's word better today than you did a year ago? What will you do to continue your growth in the next year?

May 6 – Seeking the Lord

**Today's reading: Psalms 26-30**

*“My heart says of you, ‘Seek his face!’  
Your face, Lord, I will seek” - Psalm 27:8.*

Seeking the Lord is not a passive exercise. It requires diligence and fervor. What's more, seeking the Lord requires asking good questions if you expect to get good answers. What's more, saying, “God, I will do whatever you want me to do” is meaningless if you are a serious seeker. “God, what do You want me to do?” is a much better question to ask and to keep on asking, while you reiterate your commitment to do whatever it is that God wants. If you keep on asking the Lord the same questions, however, you will keep getting the same answers, so you need regularly to come up with some different questions. Proverbs 2 directs you to seek Him like you would seek buried treasure if you were guaranteed you would find it: “Indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:3-5). Are you seeking the Lord correctly? Are you asking good questions? Do you keep asking until you get an answer?

May 7 – Don’t Play with Your Food

**Today's reading: Psalm 31-35**

*“Taste and see that the Lord is good;  
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him” - Psalm 34:8.*

David urged his readers to try the Lord, to put their complete trust in Him. The implication is perhaps that some people David knew were *not* doing that, that they were *not* tasting and then living off His goodness. You are not expected to dabble in the things of God, but to be consumed by them - in fact, at times actually to consume them. Ezekiel was directed to eat the scroll with God's words on them: “And he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel.’ So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.’ So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth” (Ezekiel 3:1-3). Have you been playing with God's food, or are you consuming it? What is God asking you to eat, to get down into your innermost being? Are you hesitating or can you take refuge in Him as you eat and trust Him totally?

May 8 – Giving Philosophy

**Today's reading: Psalms 36-40**

*“The wicked borrow and do not repay,  
but the righteous give generously . . . .  
They are always generous and lend freely;  
their children will be a blessing” - Psalm 37:21, 26.*

I heard someone say one time that God doesn't evaluate the gift you give by how much it is, but by how much you have left after you give. Generosity is not about giving large gifts, but rather

giving abundantly according to what you have, not what you don't have. Paul explained his philosophy of generosity when he was preparing to receive the offering for the Judean poor from the Corinthian church:

Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little" (2 Corinthians 8:13-15).

Are you giving generously according to what you have? Would you say you are a generous person? Would others say you are? What do you have to give besides money?

May 9 – Depression

**Today's reading: Psalms 41-45**

*"Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God" - Psalm 42:5.*

The psalmist was experiencing some mental depression for whatever reason, and was confronted with two choices. He could either cooperate with his depression, welcoming it as an inevitability of life. This would have contributed to his mental downward spiral. His second option was *not* to accept his depression and talk himself out of it with some healthy and accurate self talk. The psalmist chose the second option and confronted his depression head on, reminding himself of his relationship with God and its power to lift him from gloom. While some depression has medical causes, in this case, it was the result of faulty thinking, and the writer opted not to accept it but to fight back. The Lord spoke to Cain, prescribing the same procedure as the psalmist employed when Cain was angry and discouraged: "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?' <sup>7</sup> If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it'" (Genesis 4:6-7). Do you need to confront your depression or mood? What do you need to say to yourself to get yourself back on the right track?

May 10 – Proper Perspective

**Today's reading: Psalms 46-50**

*"Though while they live they count themselves blessed—  
and people praise you when you prosper—  
they will join those who have gone before them,  
who will never again see the light of life" - Psalm 49:18-19.*

The “they” in this verse are those who prosper. Modern media showcases the lives of the rich and famous and it is easy to become jealous and even covet what they have - beautiful homes, travel to exotic places, magnificent furnishings, clothing and jewelry, showing up at fancy events. David's wisdom pointed out, however, that no one is getting out of here alive, including the prosperous. Their wealth cannot provide eternal life, so for you to envy them and want what they have is short-sighted and dangerous. James was clear in his instructions about envy: “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice” (James 3:16). Search your heart and ask yourself, “Am I envious of what others have?” Do you look at the depictions of the rich and yearn for their lifestyle, even if it’s only some aspect of that life? Do you have a proper perspective on your and their ultimate end, along with what (and Who) the source of eternal life is?

May 11 – Cast Your Cares on Him

**Today's reading: Psalms 51-55**

*“Cast your cares on the Lord  
and he will sustain you;  
he will never let  
the righteous be shaken” - Psalm 55:22.*

Have you ever had someone say in response to your problem, “You just need to give it to the Lord.”? It can be annoying and even difficult to comprehend how you can hand off a visible problem to an invisible God. What they are really saying, and what the psalmist was communicating in this verse, is that you must first take your cares to the Lord in prayer and pray until your burden is lifted – until you feel like God has heard and has indicated He has it under control. Then you must resist every and any temptation to worry, fret, or be anxious as reflected by not eating, sleeping or carrying out your day-to-day duties. Peter wrote the same thing as the psalmist in his first epistle: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). What are you holding on to that you need to cast upon the Lord? What is stopping you? Which part of the process do you need to engage: the prayer or the follow through, or both? *Lord, worry is such a natural response to my daily challenges, but it's the wrong response! Forgive me for my doubt and refusal to take my needs to You in prayer, and then ignoring Your promise that You have everything under control. Today, I choose to cast all my cares on to You!*

May 12 – Revenge

**Today's reading: Psalms 56-60**

*“Break the teeth in their mouths, O God;  
Lord, tear out the fangs of those lions!  
Let them vanish like water that flows away;  
when they draw the bow, let their arrows fall short” - Psalm 58:6-7.*

The psalmists were not hesitant to cry out for vengeance against those who had done them wrong. This may seem "un-Christian" or vindictive, but that's probably not the case. The

psalmists were not carrying out vengeance on their own behalf, but were crying out to God. They were being brutally honest in the midst of situations where the wicked were triumphing and prospering at their expense. The writers were looking to God for answers and for deliverance. If you notice, almost each psalm of lament ends in words of hope, reiterating God is in control. Paul came to the same conclusion that the Old Testament writers did when he wrote the Roman church: “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). Do you seek your own revenge, even if it's a quick comeback to a verbal insult? Do your prayers contain the same honesty as the psalmists? Have you settled the fact that God is the avenger and not you? *I can see why You ask me to leave vengeance in Your hands. I am in no position to judge anyone’s heart or to know how much “vengeance” should be distributed. Therefore, I am leaving the vengeance business to You and will trust Your sense of perfect justice. Instead of being a dispenser of vengeance, I will be a vendor of mercy!*

May 13 – Making and Keeping Vows

**Today's reading: Psalms 61-65**

*“For you, God, have heard my vows;  
you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name” - Psalm 61:5.*

A vow is a promise or a commitment to do something. It starts with a sense that a course of action is right for you, so you speak to confirm your agreement with that sense. It can be as simple as “I’ll call you” or as complex as “I’m going back to school.” When you make these vows, God is listening and is willing to help you fulfill them. When you break those promises, God considers it a serious breach of integrity. The interesting thing is that often you make vows when you sing in church: “I surrender all” or “I will seek You with all my being” are also vows, even though they are put to music. Are you a person who makes and keeps your vows? Do you under-promise and over-deliver, meaning you say little but then follow through on the impression you had of what you need to do, especially for others? Is your word your bond, or do you say things to make yourself and others feel better, with little capability or intention of following through? *Today’s devotional confronts my tendency to make others feel better by saying something appropriate with no follow through on commitments I make. I vow to be more careful in what I say and more diligent to keep my promises.*

May 14 – The Big Difference

**Today's reading: Psalms 66-70**

*“Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior,  
who daily bears our burdens” - Psalm 68:19.*

God just doesn't bear your burdens - discouragements, failures, disappointments, sins, pain - every once in a while. He does so on a daily basis. He is always on watch and knows you inside and out, so He can give you just what you need when you need it. The challenge is that sometimes you think you need money, for example, and God sends someone with an

encouraging word! You may then say, “Lord, thank You, but I'd rather have the cash!” God knows best, however, and is deserving of praise in all circumstances and situations because He knows exactly what you need. Paul wrote, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). Can you see the difference that Paul did not say to thank God *for* all circumstances, but *in* them? Can you thank God today in faith because He is bearing your burdens, whether or not it feels like He is? Can you decide to rejoice in Him even if the circumstances are not to your liking?

May 15 – Is God Enough?

**Today's reading: Psalms 71-75**

*“Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure  
and have washed my hands in innocence.  
All day long I have been afflicted,  
and every morning brings new punishments” - Psalm 73:13-14.*

The psalmist in today's passage was struggling with whether or not it was worth it to pursue righteousness and do right, for bad things seemed to be happening no matter how much good he did. As you have seen in this devotional study so far, this is a repeating theme in the book of Psalms. The question being asked is: What do the righteous receive in return for their obedience and godly behavior? The answer is that they get God Himself – His presence and encouragement in the midst of their trials. The psalmist answered his own lament in verse 73:28: “But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.” Is God's presence in your life your goal? Is that good enough or do you regret and even resent that you don't have more stuff, less suffering or other more tangible benefits to show for your obedience?

May 16 – Faith Logic

**Today's reading: Psalms 76-80**

*“I cried out to God for help;  
I cried out to God to hear me.  
When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;  
at night I stretched out untiring hands,  
and I would not be comforted” - Psalm 77:1-2.*

In today's reading of Psalms 76-80, it is impossible to find verses that speak of anything but grief and sorrow. The people of God were in exile and the psalmist was crying out to God for clarity and restoration. He was writhing in agony as he tried to make sense of how the people of God could be in such trouble when their God, the God of the Exodus, the God of the Red Sea, the God who had delivered Israel in the past, was seemingly silent and inactive in Israel's distress. Perhaps you are facing a life situation that seems to defy "faith logic" for you put your trust in the Lord and things didn't quite work out, or the result did not seem consistent with God's promises. Are you doing what the psalmist did: repeatedly bring it before the Lord in prayer?

Are you reminding God of His past deeds and promises that seem to be light years away from where you are? Are you going to God for answers, even though He seems to be the One who brought or allowed the circumstances that led to the questions you are asking?

May 17 – Righteous and Faithful

**Today's reading: Psalms 81-85**

*“Love and faithfulness meet together;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other.  
Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,  
and righteousness looks down from heaven” - Psalm 85:10-11.*

While the psalmists often lamented their current state of affairs, they always ended their pleas for help with affirmations in God's goodness. They also began to look forward to a king who was yet to come who would take up the cause of the righteous and establish justice. Of course we now know the king they were anticipating is Jesus, and He epitomizes what is described in today's passage. He was faithful on earth and the Righteousness who came down from heaven. Now you are to follow His ways and operate in a righteousness that is not your own as you behave in a faithful manner that pleases God and blesses other people. Paul wrote, “You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (Romans 6:18). Are you a slave to righteousness? Do you mirror Jesus' heart and actions to those around you? Are you known for your faithful, consistent and godly behavior at work, school, church or neighborhood?

May 18 – Rejoice and Celebrate

**Today's reading: Psalms 86-90**

*“Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,  
who walk in the light of your presence, Lord.  
They rejoice in your name all day long;  
they celebrate your righteousness” - Psalm 89:15-16.*

"Blessed, rejoice, light, celebrate" are the key words I notice as I read today's verses. You are a *blessed* person if you know the Lord. God gives *light* to your way so you know His will and understand His ways. Knowing and having all this should cause you to *rejoice* all day long and *celebrate* His righteousness. Do you manifest those characteristics and behaviors? Is joy the of the Lord a hallmark of your persona and attitude? Is God's light shining on you to show you the way you need to go on a daily basis? Are you light to those around you? Are you celebrating God's goodness toward you? If not, what is keeping you from entering into these things? Read John 15:10-11: “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” Then work to ensure that God's joy is in you and remove anything that may be standing in its way.

May 19 – No Condemnation

**Today's reading: Psalms 91-95**

*“When I said, ‘My foot is slipping,’  
your unfailing love, Lord, supported me.  
When anxiety was great within me,  
your consolation brought me joy” - Psalm 94:18-19.*

The psalmist made a confession that he was more than a little anxious on occasion. That anxiety did not disqualify him from God's presence, but made God's presence all the more important to him. What's more, God was not offended by that most human of emotions and granted him help in his time of trouble. There are some - and I hope you are not among them - who feel like they cannot come to the Lord as they are, but rather as they *think* He would want them to be. God is more comfortable with your humanity than you are and knows your thoughts before you articulate them. Your honesty is not for His benefit but for yours, so when you confess your anxiety, for example, He does not condemn you, but gives you peace. Perhaps you need to be reminded of what Paul wrote: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2). Are you fearful of God's condemnation if you are honest in His presence? What do you need to tell or confess to the Lord today? Do you see that your honesty with God is for your benefit?

May 20 – The Lord Reigns!

**Today's reading: Psalms 96-100**

*“The Lord reigns,  
let the nations tremble;  
he sits enthroned between the cherubim,  
let the earth shake.  
Great is the Lord in Zion;  
he is exalted over all the nations.  
Let them praise your great and awesome name—  
he is holy” - Psalm 99:1-3.*

As the psalmists grappled with the present state of Israel and cried out for help and understanding, they always came to the same conclusion. Even though circumstances were not to their liking and were sometimes beyond comprehension, the Lord still ruled and reigned, and ultimately His promises would be fulfilled for His people. That conclusion always led them to one response, and that was praise and worship. It is an easy thing to praise the Lord when you get a raise, a promotion or a good report from the doctor. It is a bit more challenging when the report or situation is not to your liking. A prophet penned a commitment to praise even when the crops failed: “Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior” (Habakkuk 3:17). Has your fig, grape or olive harvest failed, along with all your other efforts? Have your flocks

disappeared? If you can praise the Lord in the midst of that, then you have come to the same conclusion that the psalmist did: The Lord reigns!

May 21 – What A Difference a Day Can Make

**Today's reading: Psalms 101-105**

*“He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold,  
and from among their tribes no one faltered.  
Egypt was glad when they left,  
because dread of Israel had fallen on them” - Psalm 105:27-38.*

Israel had been in Egypt for 430 years, and they had been in slavery most of that time. Then one day, after Pharaoh had refused to release them, he relented and the people of God began the trek know as the Exodus, through the Red Sea to the Promised Land. When they came out of Egypt, the Egyptians were so glad to see them go after the Plagues that they gave the Jews silver and gold as departing gifts. “The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. The Lord had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians” (Exodus 12:35-36). The point is that Israel's situation changed overnight as they went from slaves to wealth. Your situation can change overnight as well, for you are just a phone call, chance meeting or idea away from your breakthrough after a long period of being down and out. How can you stay in a state of expectancy for a breakthrough when things have been down in your world for so long? Can you thank God for your breakthrough even though you have no idea how or when it will come?

May 22 – Response to Thirst

**Today's reading: Psalms 116-120**

*“By the waters of Meribah they angered the Lord,  
and trouble came to Moses because of them;  
for they rebelled against the Spirit of God,  
and rash words came from Moses' lips” - Psalm 116:32-33.*

The reference in today's passage is to the story in Exodus 17:1-7 when the people grumbled against the Lord and complained to Moses because they were thirsty. They demanded that Moses give them water because they wanted their leader to provide for all their needs. This was an unrealistic demand and, what's more, the Lord had already proved He would provide, yet the people did not believe or remember. If you are experiencing lack, are you blaming the leadership of your company, school or church for your problems? If you are a leader, are you trying to do more for the people than you can really do? Or, if you are a leader, are you angry with the people instead of taking their demands and complaints to the Lord for His direction and counsel, as Moses did? What is the Lord trying to teach you in the midst of your life situation where there is no water?

May 23 – Transformed through Worship

**Today's reading: Psalms 111-115**

*“Those who make them will be like them,  
and so will all who trust in them” - Psalm 115:8.*

The *them* in this verse are idols, and the warning is a sobering one. Those who make idols will become just like *them*. What is an idol like? It depends on what that idol is, but the scary aspect of this truth is the transforming affect of the idol that comes through worship to the worshipper. The good news is that you will become more like the Lord if you worship Him, but if you direct that need to worship to anything or anyone else, you are transformed in the wrong way. It has been said that man's heart is an idol factory and that statement was correct. We can make idols of our looks, money, job, intellect, hobbies, denomination, children, heritage, government, or ideology, just to name a few. The Bible is clear on how to relate to idolatry: “Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry” (1 Corinthians 10:14). Do you have any idols in your life that rival for your affection and worship of God? There is only one thing to do if you have any, and that is destroy them now, or risk the wrong kind of spiritual transformation.

May 24 – Discipline

**Today's reading: Psalms 116-120**

*“The Lord has chastened me severely,  
but he has not given me over to death” - Psalm 118:18.*

God is your Father, and one thing that all fathers should do is discipline their children. In today's verse, the psalmist indicated his discipline had been quite severe. This brings to mind the passage in Hebrews 12:8-11, which has this to say about discipline:

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Is God disciplining you? Have you lost sight of your need for discipline because you have walked with Him for a while? Can you joyfully submit to God's training at this point in your life?

May 25 – Off Duty

**Today's reading: Psalms 121-125**

*“He will not let your foot slip—  
he who watches over you will not slumber;  
indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep” - Psalm 121:3-4.*

God is always on duty, so to speak, and He never has to take a break to refresh or rest. That means you can be off duty and entrust things to Him while you are. That is easier said than done, however, for you cannot see God at work, so the temptation is to stay on duty through worry, sleepless nights, playing the lottery, telling others your troubles, and many other ways of taking matters into your own hands. Both Jesus and Paul modeled what today's passage suggests when they were asleep while the boat they were in was being battered by storms:

Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm (Matthew 8:24-26).

Is your boat going through a storm? Are you frantically rowing to save it or are you calmly trusting the Master of the waves and wind to fulfill what He promised in Psalm 121?

May 26 – Ask Forgiveness

**Today's reading: Psalms 126-130**

*“If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,  
Lord, who could stand?  
But with you there is forgiveness,  
so that we can, with reverence, serve you” - Psalm 130:3-4.*

God is in the sin-forgiveness business, which is of course good news for all mankind. Today's verses imply several things. First, the Lord does not keep a record of sins. Once He forgives, He forgets as well, and does not keep a cumulative record. Second, if that is how the Lord keeps records, then you should do the same for your own mistakes and sins. Third, you should keep the same kind of records for others, which means once they ask forgiveness, you should let it go and not keep it fresh. Fourth, there is an aspect of forgiveness that is tied to asking, so you need to ask others and the Lord to forgive you when you sin. Paul instructed believers to examine themselves before they ate of the Lord's table to see if there were any sins they needed to deal with before eating: “So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup” (1 Corinthians 11:27-28). Do you need to take care of any sin business with the Lord or with others to obtain forgiveness? Are you keeping sin records on yourself or others? Is it time to destroy the files and start fresh? *Yes, it is time to destroy my memory files on all those who have hurt or offended me. I*

*choose to forgive anyone who has done me wrong, and I extend them mercy because I need mercy as well.*

May 27 – Self-Denial

**Today's reading: Psalms 131-135**

*“Lord, remember David  
and all his self-denial” - Psalm 132:1.*

David was God's chosen and anointed one. That did not exempt him, however, from some serious challenges and tribulation, some of it through his fault, but most of it opposition that helped develop and shape David into an even more effective leader. In today's verse, the psalmist commended David to the Lord's attention, reminding the Lord of all that David had been through, which the writer described as "self-denial." Self-denial is a way of life for the believer, for self is the greatest obstacle any believer has in his or her walk of holiness. Jesus knew this and urged His followers to make this self-denial not something that happened to them but something they did to themselves: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). Where can you do a better job of self-denial? Listening to others when you want to talk about yourself? Interrupting your schedule for someone in need? What other ways can you think of where you can improve in that particular practice?

May 28 – Our, Not My

**Today's reading: Psalms 136-140**

*“He remembered us in our low estate  
His love endures forever.  
and freed us from our enemies.  
His love endures forever” - Psalm 136:23-24.*

This psalm was probably part of the Temple worship, for it sings of "our" and not "my." There must be a time when you come together with God's people when everyone celebrates their life in Christ that has set them free from sin and death. Yet it is easy to become disillusioned, even bitter, with the church, its members and leadership. That is never an excuse, however, to shun gathering for worship on the Lord's Day or any other time when the church assembles. Paul had to address a dysfunctional church situation in Corinth, but his answer was not to stay home:

In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk (1 Corinthians 11:17-21).

Have you allowed the church's problems to keep you from attending? Can you see that these problems were present 2,000 years ago and the answer is not to withdraw, but to find a place where you can worship and celebrate your life in Christ as fellow believers?

May 29 – The Love of God

**Today's reading: Psalms 141-145**

*“Lord, what are human beings that you care for them,  
mere mortals that you think of them?  
They are like a breath;  
their days are like a fleeting shadow” - Psalm 144:3-4.*

In God's grand scheme, your life doesn't amount to much when you compare it to the universe and to the billions who exist and have existed. Yet this truth generated praise and worship in David's heart when he considered the fact that God does care for each person, including him (and you). God knows your name, what you are going through, what your purpose is and your failures, both now and the ones to come. This truth goes along with what Paul wrote in Romans 8:31b-35:

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

There is no need to pose any additional questions, just answer the ones Paul posed in this Romans' passage.

May 30 – Storm Master

**Today's reading: Psalms 146-150**

*“Praise the Lord from the earth,  
you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,  
lightning and hail, snow and clouds,  
stormy winds that do his bidding” - Psalm 148:7-8.*

Weather can be an awesome and terrifying encounter for humans, but God is in control of it all, according to today's passage. All of creation is commanded to praise the Lord in light of this power over the nature He created. It is of note that the “winds do his bidding,” which brings to mind one of the encounters with wind that Jesus had:

A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:38-40).

Are the winds of life swamping your boat? is it time you called on the Master of the storm to calm things down? Better yet, call on Him to quell the storm of fear in your own heart, and have faith that the winds are indeed doing His bidding in your world

May 31 – Study the Word

**Today's reading: Psalms 116-120**

*“Cause me to understand the way of your precepts,  
that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds” - Psalm 119:27.*

The Bible and especially the psalms have great Spirit-led prayers that you can use today in your walk with the Lord. Today's verse is one of those prayers. The psalmist asked the Lord for help so he could understand God's ways and commands. God must open your mind to comprehend His word and to gain insight into His person. Are you praying for that to happen? If you are, then are you spending any amount of time not just reading His word, but also studying it? The Jews in Berea modeled this practice when Luke reported: "Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). Don't just have good intentions to study the Word and know Him better, get some help developing a plan to do so and then follow it!

June 1 – Blessed

**Today's reading: Psalms 1-5**

*“Blessed is the one  
who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
or sit in the company of mockers,  
but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and who meditates on his law day and night” - Psalm 1:1-2.*

These are the first verses in the book of Psalms, and they set the stage for the message of the entire book. After the failure of the monarchy and Israel's exile to Babylon, the psalms were compiled, and this is a clue to the book's message: The Law or Torah is the key to an individual's success and Israel's restoration while they waited for their new king. It is interesting that when Jesus began His ministry, one of the first words He spoke was "blessed," thus positioning Himself as Israel's new Psalmist and King who had come to fulfill the Law and rule Israel:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). In the context of Psalm 1 and what Jesus said, what does it mean to be ‘poor in spirit’? Do you delight in His law and meditate on it night and day? Is your life foundation God's word or some other philosophy or denominational teaching?

June 2 – Strategy for Victims

**Today's verse: Psalms 6-10**

*“But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted;  
you consider their grief and take it in hand.  
The victims commit themselves to you;  
you are the helper of the fatherless” - Psalm 10:14.*

If you have been a victim - and to some extent everyone has - then the worst thing you can do is to try and make things right in your own strength from your own perspective of what you need. The best thing to do is to trust the Lord because when you do, he takes your grief into His own hands! It also seems that the Lord has a special “hot line” for those who suffered and are suffering from a lack of fatherly care or presence – they get His immediate and undivided attention. These verses are reminiscent of Hannah when she found herself childless:

In her deep anguish Hannah prayed to the Lord, weeping bitterly. And she made a vow, saying, “Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head” (1 Samuel 1:10-11).

Are you burdened with grief? Childless? Fatherless? Penniless? Are you a victim of some abuse or crime? Then do what Hannah did and commit your way to the Lord, standing on the promise of today's verse as you commit yourself to Him.

June 3 – Slander and Slurs

**Today's reading: Psalm 11-15**

*“Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent?  
Who may live on your holy mountain? . . .  
whose tongue utters no slander,  
who does no wrong to a neighbor,  
and casts no slur on others” - Psalm 15:1, 3.*

Psalm 15 asks a question and then provides the answers in the following verses. In verse three, the one who can dwell in God's presence is the person who controls his or her tongue. What does the psalmist mean by godly speech? That talk includes not slandering or ‘casting slurs’ on another person. A slur is a “disparaging remark” and slander is “oral communication of false and malicious statements that damage the reputation of another.” Paul wrote about the need for clean speech in Ephesians 4:29: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only

what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” Are you using your mouth to build up or tear down others? What can you do to be more positive and proactive with your words? Do you need to go back and repair any damage done to others by what you said?

June 4 – What’s in Your Heart?

**Today's reading: Psalms 16-20**

*“May he give you the desire of your heart  
and make all your plans succeed” - Psalm 20:4.*

We have been taught not to trust our hearts, for they can be deceitful - and that's true. Yet just because they “can be” doesn't mean they are, and God can use your heart to guide your paths. Not every heart matter is a trick, for God put some things in your heart to do so that you are inclined toward His will in a naturally supernatural way. What's more, the Holy Spirit's presence in your life helps give you His mind and heart, so your desires cannot all be out of whack. Paul wrote: “For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:16). What has been in your heart to do or be for many years, and just won't go away? Can you accept that it isn't going away because God put it there, and you need to act on it? If the Spirit is in you to give you the mind of Christ, why is it so difficult for you to accept that you now have that mind?

June 5 – God’s Will

**Today's reading: Psalms 21-25**

*“Who, then, are those who fear the Lord?  
He will instruct them in the ways they should choose” - Psalm 25:12.*

If your desire is to know God's will, then you will do so, for you cannot do what you do not know. This requires that you sincerely desire to know His will, which can be tricky because it involves trust and overcoming fear. If you truly commit to God's will *before* you know what it is, your next step is to overcome the fear that He will have you do something radical or totally out of character for you. The promise remains, however, that if you ask, then He will reveal His will, as Isaiah explained:

Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it” (Isaiah 30:20-21).

**Is fear of the answer keeping you from seeking God's will? Do you really believe He can reveal and you will hear His will? Are you afraid of what He will show you, thus shutting yourself off from truly hearing?**

June 6 – Do Good to Enemies

**Today's reading: Psalms 26-30**

*“Do not drag me away with the wicked,  
with those who do evil,  
who speak cordially with their neighbors  
but harbor malice in their hearts.  
Repay them for their deeds  
and for their evil work;  
repay them for what their hands have done  
and bring back on them what they deserve” - Psalm 28:3-4.*

David once again cried out that God would deal with those who were evil. Some are uncomfortable with the psalmists' cries for vengeance, but at least they were not taking matters of revenge into their own hands! They were crying out for God to do it. What's more, this set the stage for Jesus' ministry, whose hallmark was forgiveness toward those same evil people who plagued David and the psalmists:

And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:34-36).

Do you have any enemies to whom you can do good today? What can you do that will distinguish you as a follower of Jesus in your kind treatment and attitude toward those who treat you poorly?

June 7 – Opposition

**Today's reading: Psalms 31-35**

*“But I trust in you, Lord;  
I say, “You are my God.”  
My times are in your hands;  
deliver me from the hands of my enemies,  
from those who pursue me” - Psalm 31:14-15.*

The first book of Psalms, which is comprised of Psalm 1 to 41, is filled with verses that chronicle David's persecution and opposition as the king. One may not think David would not have encountered so much trouble, for God had powerfully and sovereignly chosen David and was with him. Yet God's choice did not exempt David from all kinds of problems, some of them by his own doing. You may be going through hell, so to speak, as you do God's will, and that has caused you to doubt whether or not you heard from the Lord and are on the right path. Yet the presence of opposition is not an indication you are out of God's will, but rather a confirmation

that you are in it! James wrote: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4). Have you allowed your time of testing to cast doubt on you're the way you are walking? Have you had second thoughts about whether or not you have heard from the Lord? Be encouraged today that you are on the right path!

June 8 – Loneliness

***“My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds;  
my neighbors stay far away” - Psalm 38:11.***

It's easy for people to avoid you when are going through difficulty, and they do so for many reasons. One is that they lack empathy and just don't understand what you are going through. Another is that they don't want to say the wrong thing, so they say no thing. Perhaps they think your predicament is your own fault, so they distance themselves because they are being judgmental. And sometimes people don't want to be around when you feel bad because you will make them feel bad. Whatever the reason, people can and will disappoint you, especially when you are in need. Paul experienced this kind of but he also knew the comfort of loyalty and friendship: “May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains” (2 Timothy 1:16). Have you experienced betrayal or loneliness lately? Are you bitter or resentful? Do you have the opportunity today to be a loyal friend to someone else, even though others have betrayed or abandoned you?

**Today's reading - Psalms 36-40**

June 9 – Heart to Heart

**Today's reading: Psalms 41-45**

***“Sometimes I ask God, my rock-solid God,  
‘Why did you let me down?  
Why am I walking around in tears,  
harassed by enemies?’  
They’re out for the kill, these  
tormentors with their obscenities,  
Taunting day after day,  
‘Where is this God of yours?’” - Psalm 42:9-10, The Message.***

Today's passage from a different translation captures the conversational tone of many psalms as the psalmist pours his heart out to the Lord. It is impossible to offend the Lord with your honest, transparent prayers, for God knows what's on your heart before you utter a word. The honesty is not for His benefit but for yours! What's more, we see once again that the righteous were in trouble, this time from people who were tormenting the psalmist, wondering why God wasn't helping him in his distress. The writer had to work through this seeming contradiction by means of a heart-to-heart talk with God. Moses also had honest talks with the Lord, as reported in

Numbers 11:14-15: “I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin.” Is it time you had a heart-to-heart talk with the Lord? What do you need to tell Him? What confusion do you need to set before Him?

June 10 – Wealth

**Today's reading: Psalms 46-50**

*“People, despite their wealth, do not endure;  
they are like the beasts that perish” - Psalm 49:12.*

Our society has a strange love affair with wealth. We want it, honor it, hoard it, spend it, ruthlessly pursue it, but it is always a fickle partner that goes to the highest bidder. What’s more, it cannot really bring what its seekers want most - peace and contentment. In fact, when you think about it, money and wealth are a lot of trouble, for you have to spend a lot to protect what you have – and it can still all disappear through no fault of the owner. Read this rather harsh warning directed toward the wealthy:

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter (James 5:1-5).

Having read today's verses, do you still want to devote more time to gaining wealth? Can your pursuit of wealth give you what you truly need? If not, then why agonize over gaining it? And how much is enough where wealth is concerned?

June 11 – The Will and the Help

**Today's reading: Psalms 51-55**

*“Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me” - Psalm 51:10.*

This seems like a prayer that anyone could or should pray, but on closer examination, it is a dangerous prayer that could lead to a tumultuous answer. The psalmist was praying that God would do whatever He had to do to change the psalmist on the inside, in his heart. What's more, the psalmist was praying for a steadfast spirit or, in other words, patience and diligence. The psalmist was giving God permission to rework and reshape his inner being. Paul described this inner work of Christ when he wrote in Philippians 2:13: “For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” God gives you the will to do His will and then gives you whatever help you need to do it! That's a good deal. What would God have to work in

your life to give you a pure heart and a steadfast spirit? Is there anything stopping you from praying today's prayer? Can you see that this prayer is one of total surrender?

June 12 – Private Devotions

**Today's reading: Psalms 56-60**

*“But as for me, I will sing about your power.  
Each morning I will sing with joy about your unfailing love.  
For you have been my refuge,  
a place of safety when I am in distress” - Psalm 59:16.*

David understood the importance of establishing a rhythm for his day, and that rhythm began with a time of worship or devotions. Many have insisted that this is the only pattern to follow, but I do not agree. It's important that you establish a daily pattern or rhythm that works for you, and that may mean that you have your devotions in the evening or morning, according to when you function best. If I don't get to devotions in the morning, then I tend not to get to them. There were times when Jesus had to spend His time with the Father at night: “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God” (Luke 6:12). Do you have a regular time for your devotional expression? What is keeping you from that regular discipline? Are you an early morning or late night person?

June 13 – Scheming or Planning?

**Today's reading: Psalms 61-65**

*“They plot injustice and say,  
‘We have devised a perfect plan!’  
Surely the human mind and heart are cunning” - Psalm 64:6.*

God put the ability in people to plan, but of course the Fall caused mankind to plan and scheme how to take care of themselves. This planning branched out into people's desire to reach God on their own terms instead of God's. This is exemplified by the story known as the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. When God saw their scheme, He said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other” (Genesis 11:5-6). God was not threatened by their planning. He knew they were plotting something that would require Him to judge them for their disobedience (God had told them to spread out; they wanted to stay put). Jesus came to restore mankind's ability to plan but to do it for righteous and not selfish ends. Do you see planning as spiritual or unspiritual? What could you accomplish for the Lord if you had a 10- 15- or 25-year plan? Are you planning to achieve God's purpose or your own?

June 14 – Your Burden-Bearer

**Today's reading: Psalms 66-70**

***“Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior,  
who daily bears our burdens” - Psalm 68:19.***

David broke into praise when he realized that God is both a long-term Savior as well as a short-term Helper who bore his burdens, not just every once in a while, but daily! What does it mean that God bears burdens? It means that He carries something so you don't have to. This can only happen, however, when you allow Him to be your burden-bearer; otherwise, you are left with a heavy load. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” If you have a heavy yoke or burden, then you have to ask yourself, “Whose yoke am I carrying?”, because it cannot be the assignment that Jesus gave you. Are you under a heavy yoke today? What can you do to transfer that yoke to Jesus, the Burden-Bearer?

June 15 – Mourning

**Today's reading: Psalms 71-75**

***“When my heart was grieved  
and my spirit embittered,  
I was senseless and ignorant;  
I was a brute beast before you” - Psalm 73:21-22.***

The psalmist made an honest confession that he was beside himself with an emotional breakdown over some issue that caused him to mourn and grieve. Some people do not allow themselves to mourn, not just the loss of a loved one, but any loss - job, life status, the potential of what could have been if someone else had not messed up, or what could have been if the mourner himself or herself had not messed up. It is painful to mourn, but absolutely necessary if the mourner is to get to the other side of healing and emotional health. Paul instructed believers about mourning when he wrote: “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). You can mourn because the situation you are mourning is in God's hands and you have hope. You do have hope don't you, or have you lost it over some situation? Have you resisted mourning, thinking it is somehow not proper behavior for a believer? Will you give yourself permission to mourn today until the season of mourning ends? *Thank You, Lord, that You have given me an opportunity to grieve the loss of something or someone important to me. I trust You to heal my heart but until You do, I will continue to mourn, realizing it is part of my healing process. I have confidence that how I feel will change one day, but until I do, I will entrust this situation to You as I mourn the loss.*

June 16 – Bible Hope

**Today's reading: Psalm 76-80**

***“I will remember the deeds of the Lord;  
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago” - Psalm 77:11.***

The psalmist was in a tough place, as the psalmists often were, and he determined to take solace and encouragement from the miracles God had performed for Israel in ages past. In other words, the psalmist went to the Scriptures to find help in his time of trouble. If you are going through a tough time, you can certainly draw on the past for help by remembering what God has done for you. If you cannot find help there, however, you can and should go to the Bible to find consolation and support from what God did for others centuries ago. Your thinking should be, “If He did it for them, He can do it for me!” Paul referred to this role the Bible should have in your life when he wrote: “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope” (Romans 15:4). Do you have a favorite character in the Bible from whom you draw strength and instruction? Are you using the Word as your personal cheerleader and oxygen tank when you are down or having trouble breathing in encouragement?

June 17 – In Jesus

**Today's reading: Psalms 81-85**

*“Love and faithfulness meet together;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other” - Psalm 85:10.*

The Psalms are about Jesus, even though David and others wrote them out of the reality of their own experience and need. In Jesus, we have a God who understands the human dilemma and the frailty of mankind. In Jesus, we have a man who became like you and me in all things except sin, and showed how to live a life pleasing to God. He not only gave the Law but He lived it in such a way so as to fulfill the Law. In Him, the *righteousness* of God in Christ and the *peace* with God gained through the cross of Christ did indeed come together or *kiss* each other. Jesus lived the psalms, prayed the psalms, and epitomized the message of the psalms to show us the way to relate to God as pilgrims in this world. Paul wrote this about Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:6-8).

Take some time to meditate on today's verses, and then thank Jesus that He is your righteousness and that His death on the cross brought you peace with God the Father.

June 18 – Anointing of Joy

**Today's reading: Psalms 86-90**

*“Bring joy to your servant, Lord,  
for I put my trust in you” - Psalm 86:4.*

There are some people who don't trust joy. They claim it is an emotion and cannot be trusted as a reliable source of guidance or confirmation. If joy comes, that's all well and good, but duty, rationality, and freedom from emotions are preferable when worshiping, making decisions, and walking out discipleship. If all that's true, then why did David pray that God would bring him joy? If joy is not to be trusted, why did Jesus have and follow His joy? If joy is so unreliable and fickle, why would God create you with joy in doing certain things and then *not* allow you to follow or savor that joy? We read about Jesus in Hebrews 1:9, "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." Jesus was anointed with joy, and that joy led and fed Him as He carried out His earthly mission. If Jesus had, expressed and followed joy, you can be assured that God has the same pattern for you to follow. Are you seeking and following your joy? Are you praying for it as David did?

June 19 – Your Father's Discipline

**Today's reading: Psalms 91-95**

***"Blessed is the one you discipline, Lord,  
the one you teach from your law;  
you grant them relief from days of trouble,  
till a pit is dug for the wicked" - Psalm 94:12-13.***

God is always teaching and disciplining His people, and here the psalmist indicated why He is doing that. He does it to prevent us from getting into trouble down the road. He also does it so that the righteous will be protected and preserved, set apart is the exact phrase, until such time as God is ready to judge the wicked. This also protects the righteous so they will not be judged along with wicked. Paul reiterated this principle when he wrote, "Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:32). Are you experiencing discipline from your Heavenly Father's hand? What does this discipline look like? Are you chafing under or resistant to this discipline? Can you accept it in faith that it is in your long-term best interests for your Father to do this? Can you not just endure it, but see that you are blessed because of it, and even thank God for it? *Lord, the Bible is right: no discipline is pleasant, but it's necessary. I accept Your work in my life and important, and thank You for it.*

June 20 – Decide to Rejoice

**Today's reading: Psalms 96-100**

***"Light shines on the righteous  
and joy on the upright in heart.  
Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous,  
and praise his holy name" - Psalm 97:11-12.***

We return once again to the topic of joy. In these verses, we see that joy shines on the righteous, coming from an source outside of the recipient. It is not dependent on circumstances and is not a

decision on the part of the joyful. It is a decision, however, to rejoice – to allow the joy to show on your face and in your demeanor. Paul outlined how this joy and peace can shine down on a righteous person:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:5-7).

Spend a few minutes today reflecting on this concept of joy and the process that Paul outlined in Philippians. Are you rejoicing? Do others know you have joy? As God shines joy on you, do you reflect it to others? Are you anxious? Do you pray with thanksgiving? Do you have the peace that passes all understanding?

June 21 – Another Way to Rejoice

**Today's reading: Psalms 101-105**

*“Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name;  
make known among the nations what he has done.  
Sing to him, sing praise to him;  
tell of all his wonderful acts.  
Glory in his holy name;  
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.  
Look to the Lord and his strength;  
seek his face always” - Psalm 105:1-4.*

Yesterday we looked at the concept of rejoicing, which is making your joy evident through words, demeanor, and song. Today's passage also mentions rejoicing, ordering those who seek the Lord to rejoice while adding another way to rejoice, and that is to share your testimony to as much of your world as possible. In other words, your devotion and worship cannot be a private matter, but must be carried out publicly to encourage others to join you – or at least to listen. A great example of this is found in Acts:

They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah (6:40-42).

**Are you in a worse situation than the apostles were?** If not, then you have no excuse *not* to be doing what they did – rejoicing and proclaiming the reason for their joy!

June 22- The Words of God

**Today's reading: Psalms 106-110**

*“The Lord says to my lord:  
‘Sit at my right hand  
until I make your enemies  
a footstool for your feet’” - Psalm 110:1.*

Jesus quoted this verse when He was teaching the people in Mark 12:35-37:

While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, “Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: “‘The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’ David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?’” The large crowd listened to him with delight.

Notice that Jesus acknowledged that David wrote this psalm. Then He recognized that the Holy Spirit had inspired David's words, speaking through David in the words of the psalm. Finally, the people so enjoyed Jesus' insight into the Word that they listened with absolute delight. Do you have the same high view of Scripture? Do you see the Bible as the words of God? If you have the privilege of speaking and teaching God's word, do people delight to listen to you as Jesus gives you insight into His word? If you sit under a teacher of God's word, are you being fed from the Word or are you tolerating poor teaching in the interest of tradition or family ties? *Lord, I need to be fed from Your Word or else I will shrivel spiritually from malnutrition. I will no longer settle for entertainment from the Word, but will seek substance for me and my family.*

June 23 – Light in Darkness

**Today's reading: Psalms 111-115**

*“Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,  
for those who are gracious and  
compassionate and righteous” - Psalm 112:4.*

God is able to protect His own flock no matter what the circumstances are. God preserved Noah and his family during the Flood. He protected the Jews when the plagues were tormenting Egypt. The Lord protected Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace. He also protected Daniel in the lions' den:

At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?” Daniel answered, “May the king live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty” (Daniel 6:19-23).

Like Daniel, are you facing the lions over some stand you have taken for the Lord, some persecution like a job loss, broken relationship or economic oppression? Are you afraid because of your opposition? Learn from the examples mentioned here, and don't fear, for God can make your light shine no matter how dark it gets!

June 24 – Addictions

**Today's reading: Psalms 116-120**

*“Truly I am your servant, Lord;  
I serve you just as my mother did;  
you have freed me from my chains” - Psalm 116:16.*

The psalmist had a family heritage of serving the Lord, yet the psalmist also had a testimony that he had been in bondage or chains at some point in time, perhaps even while he was serving the Lord. It is possible to love and serve the Lord and still become or continue to be addicted to something as simple as television reality shows or more serious like drugs or pornography. God is able to break your chains no matter how strong they are, because He is stronger, but you must want to be set free - God will not separate you from your friends if you are that attached to them. Jesus set a man free and if this man could be set free, then you can be set free as well:

This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones (Mark 5:3-5).

Are you addicted to something or do you have an overpowering negative habit? Cry out to the Lord today and He will set you free, but only if that is what you want to be free.

June 25 – Go Where God Is

**Today's reading: Psalms 121-125**

*“I rejoiced with those who said to me,  
'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'  
Our feet are standing  
in your gates, Jerusalem” - Psalm 122:1-2.*

This psalm is one of a collection or series known as the psalms of ascent (Psalms 120-134). Many believe these psalms were recited by pilgrims while they made their way to Jerusalem as the Lord had commanded them to do three times every year. God did not seem to mind putting the people through the rigors of travel in order to engage His presence in Jerusalem. Even today, when the Lord wants to speak to His people, He often has them go on a trip, for then they are out of their comfort zone and more aware of their environment and His voice. Jesus was with His disciples in Jerusalem but then directed them to go north to Galilee, even though He could have spoken to them in Jerusalem: “Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where

Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said . . ." (Matthew 28:16-18a). Has God put it on your heart to go somewhere where God promised that He will meet you? Are you trying to talk yourself out of going? Are you thinking that what He has to say to you He can say where you are right now, so you don't have to go?

June 26 – Waiting on the Lord

**Today's reading: Psalms 126-130**

*“I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,  
and in his word I put my hope.  
I wait for the Lord  
more than watchmen wait for the morning,  
more than watchmen wait for the morning” - Psalm 130:5-6.*

There is no more misunderstood or misused concept in your walk with God than “waiting on the Lord.” Most people consider waiting on the Lord the same as waiting on a train or bus. They passively wait, looking down the tracks or road to see if the transportation is coming. If it doesn't come, then they are exempt from any responsibility or action. That is not waiting; that is abdicating responsibility. Re-read the verses above and notice how the psalmist's entire being was waiting. He was searching and all his energy and faculties were focused on that task. If you are waiting on the Lord for a new job, then spend your time now getting ready for that job, as Abraham Lincoln once said: “I will study and get ready, and perhaps my chance will come.” Where are you passively waiting and instead should be actively pursuing a goal while you wait for your God-given breakthrough? Where are you waiting for God to do what only you can do? Is your waiting an opportunity for growth or a dereliction of duty?

June 27 – Psalms and Revelation

**Today's reading: Psalms 131-135**

*“All you Israelites, praise the Lord;  
house of Aaron, praise the Lord;  
house of Levi, praise the Lord;  
you who fear him, praise the Lord.  
Praise be to the Lord from Zion,  
to him who dwells in Jerusalem” - Psalms 135:19-21.*

The psalms are a mixture of individual and corporate expressions of and exhortations to praise. In today's passage, we see a corporate exhortation that covers the nation, families, tribes, and all who feared the Lord. The end goal of everything in Psalms is praise, which is a focus on God that transcends circumstances to His majesty and goodness. When you look at psalms from that perspective, you see that it mirrors the message of Revelation, which is also a picture of praise and worship as the ultimate human expression:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God (Revelation 7:9-11).

Is praise and worship the end of your spiritual devotion and seeking? Are you focused on God or on yourself and your world of family and work/ministry? Do you have both corporate and individual expressions of praise in your spiritual repertoire?

June 28 – Fleeing God’s Presence

**Today's reading: Psalm 136-140**

*"Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?" - Psalm 139:7.*

Adam and Eve tried to flee from God's presence, comically hiding in a bush with fig-leaf coverings as God walked in the Garden. They were afraid after their sin and tried their best to hide. Jonah also attempted to run from God, in his case to avoid carrying out God's directive to fulfill His prophetic purpose in Nineveh: "But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord" (Jonah 1:3). Fear is the reason those three tried to flee from God's presence, and fear will cause you to do the same thing, actually blocking God's voice in your heart that is there to direct your steps. Are you hiding from God, afraid because of your sin or because you are afraid of your purpose? Do you see how silly that is? You know that God knows where you are, so why go through the futility of avoiding His love or His will?

June 29 – Prayers for Kids

**Today's reading: Psalms 141-145**

*"Then our sons in their youth  
will be like well-nurtured plants,  
and our daughters will be like pillars  
carved to adorn a palace" - Psalm 144:12.*

David was a fabulous writer, so talented that we still recite his poetry and put his lyrics to music 3,000 after his death! In today's verse, he penned two similes for offspring that I incorporated into my prayers for my own children - that my son would be a well-nurtured plant and my daughter like a pillar carved for a palace! I then took that prayer to go beyond my family to the children youth in my church. Another passage that makes a great prayer for your children is found in Isaiah 44:3-5:

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. Some will say, 'I belong to the Lord'; others will call themselves by the name of Jacob; still others will write on their hand, "The Lord's," and will take the name Israel.

On whose behalf can you start praying these prayers? For your children? Grandchildren? Nieces and nephews? Friends?

June 30 – Rejoice in His Love

**Today's reading: Psalms 146-150**

*“Let them praise his name with dancing  
and make music to him with timbrel and harp.  
For the Lord takes delight in his people;  
he crowns the humble with victory.  
Let his faithful people rejoice in this honor  
and sing for joy on their beds” - Psalm 149:3-5.*

The Lord just doesn't tolerate you, He delights in you! He watches over you and bestows honor on you as you humble yourself to submit to His will and rejoice in His ways. If this truth doesn't exhilarate you and fill you with joy, then you may not fully comprehend either what God's love means or the significance of the favor you have with Him. Paul grasped God's great love for His people when he wrote:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:37-39).

Take some time today to reflect on the fact that God takes great joy in His love for and relationship with you. Ask Him to reveal to you any hindrance like a sense of rejection or failure that would keep you from a full appreciation of His love for you. Then work to remove that blockage so you can rejoice in His love for you!