

# PSALMS

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# PSALM 1

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish (Psalm 1).*

The collection of Psalms is the handbook for crying out to Yahweh as we are in covenant relationship with Him. As we cry out, the Psalms are expressive for us. As we cry out, the Psalms are formative for us.

## Four Things to Keep in Mind

1. The grid of nine postures:
  - Confession
  - Thanksgiving
  - Lament
  - Hope/Trust
  - Petition
  - Testimony
  - Call to Worship
  - Adoration
  - Re-orientation
2. They stand on their own and work together.
3. They are for the individual and the community.
4. They move us to a real hope in the Messiah.

1. In all the dialog that occurs in our culture today about being happy, would you trust the message of this Psalm as a reliable guide to being happy?
  
2. There are two important words in verse two. What do you think it means to “delight” in the law of Yahweh? What do you think is involved in “meditating” on it? Where does “reading” fit in with these things?
  
3. What is important about the idea that the tree of verse three yields its fruit “in its season”?
  
4. What is “chaff”? What are some important contrasts between a tree and chaff? Why do people choose to be chaff rather than being trees?
  
5. What things in verses five and six do you need to be reminded of often? What are some things we could do to bring these things forward in each other’s minds more often?

# PSALM 101

*I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to you, O Lord, I will make music. I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil. Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure. I will look with favor on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he who walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me. No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes. Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land, cutting off all the evildoers from the city of the Lord (Psalm 101).*

Yahweh meets with us through the Psalms to strengthen our covenant relationship with Him. Psalm 101 will serve as a life creed to help us complete the journey with Him.

With the help of His Spirit in me:

- I will pursue completely Yahweh's way for me, hoping and living for the day He brings His plan to completion.
- I will demand integrity of my heart especially in private.
- I will keep my eyes from worthless things.
- I will continually pry myself from the grip of spiritual mediocrity.
- I will over-rule my heart as it twists the truth to my liking/advantage.
- I will take a stand against malicious conversations.
- I will turn away from the many faces of arrogance.
- I will seek the company and counsel of those faithful to Yahweh.
- I will separate myself from those who utilize deceit for gain.
- I will watch for and undo the injustices of evil people.

1. David said he would ponder the way that is “blameless”. In what ways is it possible to lead a blameless life? What does the word “ponder” say to you? Why do you think “integrity of heart” was important to David “within my house”?
  
2. What are some of the obviously worthless things men set before their eyes? What are less obvious ones? What are some things you must do if you are to follow through on this commitment?
  
3. Verses 3-7 speak to the kind of people David would allow to be close to him. He says that the work of those who fall away “will not cling to me.” What are the “works” of such people and what is significant about David’s word choice, “will not cling to me”?
  
4. How do you keep a healthy distance between yourself and such people as David mentions in these verses without being unloving to them?
  
5. Many would say that deceit is the easiest of all human weaknesses to fall into. Do you agree? Why or why not? What are some reasons we choose to be deceitful?

# PSALM 19

*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (Psalm 19:11-17).*

Yahweh meets with us through the Psalms and consistently points us to Jesus and the Bible to strengthen our covenant relationship with Him.

Yahweh's written revelation is:

- complete, missing nothing essential. So it refreshes true life in us.
- certain and trustworthy. So it gives wisdom to us in our naiveté.
- straight, straight-forward and untwisted. So it brings us hope.
- pure, unclouded and bright. So it clarifies tricky stuff in us.
- clean, unsoiled by things human. So it points us in the eternal way.
- true, certain and unalterable. So it reminds us of His just decrees that WILL stand.

Through the Bible God becomes your prized possession; He authors the sweetest of your experiences, warns and deeply rewards you, becomes your rock and your redeemer!

As you read over verses 7-9 you are reading a description of the nature of Scripture, along with statements that show its effect on us.

1. What meant the most to you of the various words that describe the nature of Scripture, i.e. perfect, sure, right, pure, clean and true?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. As you read the effects Scripture can have on us in these verses which effect are you most in need of today?

As you read verses 10 and 11 you are reading about the value of Scripture in our lives.

1. Verse 10 speaks about how desirable the words of Scripture are. Does that mean they will always make you feel good? What is an example of something you read in Scripture that was really good for you but felt bad?
2. What do you think David is trying to express when he describes the words of Yahweh as “Sweeter than honey”?
3. What are some things that Scripture has kept you from that could have really harmed you? How have you experienced reward through the Scripture?
4. What would you like to accomplish this year to increase your commitment to Scripture?

# PSALM 16

*Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips. The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16).*

As we “cry out to Yahweh,” turn to Him and His people as our source of direction, wisdom and calm, He gives our lives a miraculous trajectory. Approaching the finish, we:

- grieve the increasing losses and sorrow of those on other paths. Their choices are costing them their life-blood.
- become aware that Yahweh’s faithful workings in us have led to pleasant memories, even of the unpleasant circumstances.
- feel deeply united to Yahweh, counseled, splendidly changed and remarkably composed by Him.
- are assured that we have accomplished what mattered to Him and have chosen what really delivers life.
- see that the view forward, though obstructed, is stunning!

1. David states his core commitment to God in verses 2-3. What are important elements of it that you can learn from? What in David’s commitment have you imitated? What remains undone?

2. What are some signs that a good thing has become too important to us? What are some other “gods” that you have run after at various times?



3. What is David saying about himself and the Lord in verse 5? What's great about choosing the Lord as your "portion and cup"? Think of this language and the words of Christ in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). What are some things we should expect in our journey with the Lord as we make this commitment?
  
4. Verses 6-10 describe David's experience with Yahweh that came as a result of this commitment. What stands out about it? What in it do you most desire?
  
5. Why is verse 11 so important for us in our walk with the Lord?

# PSALM 22

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame....(PSALM 22).*

1. If God seems distant, like he has forsaken you, is that a problem that should be fixed or a season to endure?
2. Has there been a time in your life where God felt silent, or like his presence was hard to see in your life (maybe its right now!)? If you could go back to that time in your life, what would you tell yourself? Are there statements from this Psalm that you would want to say?
3. What is the actual request of God that is made in this Psalm? What percentage of your prayers are requests?
4. Jesus quotes the opening line in Psalm 22, but does so as an allusion to the entire Psalm. Did God the Father say yes or no to Jesus' request for deliverance?
5. The tone and language of 22-31 is different from 1-21. Why do you think there is this shift?

# PSALM 13

*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me (Psalm 13).*

1. What verse registers in your soul? Why?
2. Write about a time in your life that gave you "sorrow in your heart all day."
3. What is the actual request of God that is made in this Psalm? What percentage of your prayers are requests? What other statements are made in these psalms that need to become a part of your prayer life?
4. Why the shift in tone in verses 5-6? Who or what caused it?
5. How is your purity? Specifically, where have your thoughts been typically both in the busy times and in the quiet times? How does this Psalm instruct your thought life?

# PSALM 73

When we find ourselves envying sinners, that's an important time of expression and formation.

Expression:

- Pray about it.
- Dig to the level of the heart: to envy sinners is to wrestle with God's justice.
- Own the weakness.
- Express the recommitment with the same level of intensity as the lament.

Formation:

- Can you trust God to be just?
- Are you living in the shame of your confession?
- Is God safe territory for you?
- Is nearness to God your ruling desire?

1. In verse 2 and 3, what specifically caused this person to “almost stumble”?

2. Verse 3-5 sound very different than 18-20. What causes the shift in perspective?

3. Verse 28 says that “it is good to be near God.” Write of a time when you realized this in your own life.

4. In what circumstances or life situations is this Psalm good for you to pray?

5. Verse 25 says that “there is nothing on earth I desire besides you.” Why does he say “desire” here? Can this statement be a true prayer for you? What wants and desires are ahead of God?

# PSALM 81

*Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day. For it is a statute for Israel, a rule of the God of Jacob. He made it a decree in Joseph when he went out over the land of Egypt. I hear a language I had not known: "I relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket. In distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me! There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. "But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways! I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. Those who hate the Lord would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. But he would feed you[e] with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you" (Psalm 81).*

Let us listen and submit to God.

- God is great. Sing!
- God's admonishment is loving and safe. Seek it!
- God hasn't given up. Repent!

Are you listening to God?

1. In what ways do you think the church is listening to the Lord? In what ways is the church ignoring the Lord?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What about you? In what ways are you listening/ignoring the Lord?

3. In conjunction with the first two questions, in verse 9, the Lord gives a command. How does the command to get rid of idols match up with the plea for Israel to listen? What two specific idols in your life are prohibiting you from obeying the Lord?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Notice the difference in tone between verses 1-3 and 8-13. Its almost as if there are two different Psalms. Why would praise, joy and singing accompany a rebuke from the Lord?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Verses 14-16 give a vision of what Israel’s life would be like if they would “walk in His ways.” From your understanding of following Jesus, what does your life lived in obedience to Him look like?

# PSALM 78

We have a responsibility to pass on faith in Jesus Christ to the next generation and we should ransack daily life for opportunities to do so.

**The core message has two parts:**

**Part 1:**

- the problem (verses 9-64).
- We are faithless and stuck in sin.
- (Amazingly, God remains compassionate and faithful.)

**Part 2:**

- the solution (verses 65-72).
- We need an ongoing, real relationship with God's Messiah.

1. Verse 7-8 gives the purpose of the teaching in all of Psalm 78. Are we doing a good job at teaching the next generation the things in verse 7-8? Why or why not?

2. Notice verse 9-11 (further reinforced in verses 16-17, 22, 32, 36-37, 56). Who is the problem and what is their problem?



3. What miracle do you long for in your life? Will that actually help you believe God more, and feel closer to him?
  
4. In the middle of describing the ongoing cycle of rebellion, the Psalm declares God as “compassionate.” Do you find this to be true of God? Tell a time in your life where God was compassionate to you.
  
5. Verse 4 says that we will “tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord.” What is one key deed of the Lord from this Psalm that you should try to pass on to the next generation?

## PSALM 2

*Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him (Psalm 2).*

1. How would you answer the question in verse one? Why are people so opposed to God? Share a story of a time when you experienced or witnessed the kind of opposition to God talked about in this Psalm.
2. At first sight, verses 4-6 make the Lord seem prideful. Is that really what is going on here? Why does the Lord laugh and say what he says?
3. What are you doing to serve the LORD with fear, and rejoicing with trembling?
4. Verses 1-3 are quoted in Acts 4:23-31. How are the believers there using this Psalm in their situation? What does their prayer bring about?

# PSALM 91

*Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set tHe who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say[a] to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot. "Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation" (Psalm 91).*

1. When trouble crowds into your life where do you usually turn as a FIRST response? (no canned answers allowed!) How can we help each other practice verse 2 as our first response?
2. Look at the language of verse 3. Write of a trap you have fallen into and how the Lord helped you, or IS helping you escape.
3. The statements of verses 5-13 are spectacular. How did Satan tempt Jesus with these verses (see Luke 4:9-11)? Has Satan ever shamed you into reckless faith?

4. Write out your thoughts about what it means to hold fast to Yahweh in love (v.14).  
What are some things He is convicting you about as you think about this?
  
5. God states several things He will do in the lives of those who hold fast to Him in love. Which one especially ministers to you today and why?

# PSALM 95

*Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. For forty years I loathed that generation and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways." Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest" (Psalm 95).*

1. Verses 1, 2, and 6 call us to sing, to be in his presence and to worship/bow down (notice also that Psalm 96, 98, and 100 begin the same way) Why do we have to be commanded to sing and worship? Why don't we just do it without being told?
2. Verse 3 and 7 begin with the word "for," and go on to articulate reasons for worshipping Yahweh. Which one strikes you personally as a reason for worship?
3. Verse 11 says "they shall not enter my rest," a phrase expounded upon greatly in Hebrews 3-4. What does it mean to enter into God's "Sabbath" rest today? In other words, what do you do for rest in your life, and how does this Psalm affirm or challenge your rest?
4. Verse 8 calls us to not harden our hearts. What hardness exists in your heart toward the Lord today? According to this Psalm, how can that hardness of heart change? And when?

## PSALM 32

*Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart! (Psalm 32).*

1. Verse 1 and 2 use the word "blessed." In what context do Christians normally use the word blessed and how do these verses change our usage of the word?
2. Have you experienced a time where your "bones wasted away" (verse 3)? Share a story of personal experience with verses 3-5.
3. Why are we so afraid of confessing our sin to the Lord and to each other?
4. What about this psalm shifts your thinking about God's character or how we relate with him?

## PSALM 51

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar (Psalm 51).*

1. What was the most significant thing that happened in you through Psalm 51 and what you learned about confession?
  
2. Since God's Spirit inspired the words of Scripture, Psalm 51 expresses what God wants to do in us and through us as we confess our sins. It is a prayer he will answer. So, move through the Psalm together and make a list of the things he will do as we confess our sins.

3. Based on the feelings David mentions in verses 8-12, you owe it to yourself to do something when you feel out of sorts or have the “blahs.” What is that thing? What are some ways we try to cure these feelings?
  
4. Verse 17 is a very important verse. What is being described with the terms “broken spirit, broken and contrite heart”? Write down your experience of what this feels like.



## PSALM 119:1-8

*Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me! (Psalm 119:1-8)*

Yahweh is our sovereign Creator-God, innately true/trustworthy and loving/kind. This means the following things are true about what He has revealed.

- His instruction, His version of truth, His thought-patterns, given to us in writing lead us to living blest.
- He has woven these into the fabric of human existence. Whole-hearted obedience alone leads to living blest.
- He Himself is essential as our companion, leader, advocate and helper, for us to feel blest.

1. What would you tell somebody that some of the blessings are that come with following God's instructions?

2. Since no one can perfectly follow God's instructions, what do the terms "whole heart" (verse two) and "kept diligently" (verse four) mean to you? What are the symptoms that we are following God's instructions half-heartedly?

3. There are expressions in verses five, seven and eight that indicate that the author felt the elusiveness of obedience. Why do you think the Spirit inspired these expressions in a Psalm that is all about the importance of obedience to Yahweh's word?

4. There are a number of expressions used in this passage for Yahweh's word. How many different ones are used in these verses and what subtle differences are there between the various terms (like law, testimonies, ways, precepts, etc.)?

## PSALM 119:33-40

*Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways. Confirm to your servant your promise, that you may be feared. Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good. Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life! (Psalm 119:33-40)*

1. How many requests are in these verses? Which one or two do you really identify with in your life right now?
2. In verse 37, how does God turn our eyes from worthless things? What are the worthless things you want Him to turn your eyes from? How does God answer this?
3. Look at the content of these requests. How do these line up with your typical requests in your prayer life? Is there a shift in your relationship with God that needs to happen that will transform your prayers to these types of requests?
4. In verse 35, why would he ask Yahweh to "lead him" in a certain path that he delights? If he delights in the path of Yahweh's commandments, shouldn't he already walk the path and not need Yahweh's leadership?

## PSALM 139

*O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you. Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139)*

1. When is a time that you were fully aware of God's presence in your life? When have you most questioned God's presence in your life? Do you think its possible for God to be "absent" from certain situations?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Write down some specific challenges and burdens that you have. How might Psalm 139 speak to you as you face these things?

3. In verse 17, David says that God's thoughts are precious to him. What are God's thoughts? What's your thought life like? When is the last time you sought God's thoughts on a certain circumstance in our culture or in your life?

4. What about God's power and presence is comforting? What is unsettling about it?

# PSALM 121

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. (Psalm 121)*

1. In speaking of Yahweh as our helper (verse 2), the writer immediately states an important truth about Him. What is it? What are some reasons why we need to be reminded of this?
2. Read verses three and four. What kinds of things make you wonder if God is paying attention to events in this world? How do you get past such thoughts?
3. What does it mean to you that “The Lord is your keeper” (verse 5)?
4. Verses seven and eight say some more things about Yahweh as our “keeper”. Since these are true, why do we get sick and why do we die?
5. Based on what you know is said in the Bible, and what you have learned from life, what are some of the things God might bring about in our lives by allowing evil to impact us?

## PSALM 127

*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127)*

1. This psalm is written by Solomon. What is “the house” he is referring to? What is significant about Solomon writing on how to “build the house” well?
2. How does the Lord actually build a home and watch over a city? What is the nature of the work and who does it?
3. What are the critical things a husband and wife need to engage if they are to be certain that God is building their home?

4. In verses five through seven some important things are said about children.  
What things are said about children that are significant to you?

5. If you were asked by someone to give your opinion on what good parenting is, what are some things you would say based on these verses?



# PSALM 130-131

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

*O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. (Psalm 130-131)*

1. Part of our spiritual journey will be experiences that sink us into the depths. Why is the truth of verses three and four important at such times?
2. What was a season in your life when you were waiting for the Lord? What part was the hardest? What kind of people were helpful? Do you have any advice for others in that situation?
3. Verses seven and eight speak of some great things about the Lord that make Him our hope. What are those great things? How would you tell someone about these?

4. What valuable questions might this Psalm pose to us when we are struggling with anxiety or stress?
  
5. God wants to help us calm and quiet our souls. How do you do that? What can you share with others that has worked for you? What kind of people help you do this?

## PSALM 146

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord! (Psalm 146)*

- The Psalms urge us into a partnership with God.
- The Psalms are expressive for us. They give us language that is transparent, honest and from the depths of our souls. Yahweh meets us and answers us in these conversations.
- The Psalms are formative for us. All humans trust and worship something. The Psalms nurture us in the direction of greater trust in Him, specifically in His Messiah.
- So... pursue a greater trust in Jesus as you partner with Him to accomplish His plan.

1. Write down some experiences where you have goofed, like verse three warns against, and trusted in someone/thing that perished.
  
2. What are some things about Yahweh mentioned in verses 5-10 that make Him a great blessing to us? Which of these means the most to you in your life right now? Do you feel He is a GREAT blessing during the average day, or do you lose sight of Him?

3. In the things spoken of in these verses we see the bigness of God and what we could call "His littleness"—His individual touch. Why must we recall both of these dimensions of His nature? Which is easiest for you to stay in touch with?
  
4. This Psalm speaks of "the sojourners" in verse nine. In what sense are we just sojourners on earth and in what sense do we need to put down roots?
  
5. How is the study of Psalms impacting where you turn FIRST in trouble?