

# Psalms

Written by at least seven authors (of whom David is the most notable), the Book of Psalms spans a thousand years of Israel's history, from the time of Moses to the return of the exiles from Babylon. "Psalm" comes from a Greek word meaning "a song sung to the accompaniment of a plucked instrument." Used as the temple hymnbook, the Psalms express praise to God in good times, fear of enemies in bad times, and an overriding confidence in His goodness, majesty, and power.

SECTIONS 107-150	BOOK 1: PSALMS 1-41	BOOK 2: PSALMS 42-72	BOOK 3: PSALMS 73-89	BOOK 4: PSALMS 90-106	BOOK 5: PSALMS 107-150
<b>MAIN AUTHOR(S)</b>	David	David & Korah	Asaph	Anonymous	David
<b>POSSIBLE COMPILER</b>	David	Hezekiah		Ezra/Nehemiah	
<b>CONTENT</b>	Hymns of Worship	Hymns of Petition		Hymns of Praise	
<b>TOPICAL LIKENESS TO PENTATEUCH</b>	Genesis (Mankind)	Exodus (Redemption)	Leviticus (Worship)	Numbers (Wandering)	Deuteronomy (Word of God)
<b>BENEDICTION OF PRAISE</b>	41:13	72:18-19	89:52	106:48	150:1-6
<b>SPAN OF AUTHORSHIP</b>	About 1,000 Years				
<b>DATES OF COMPILATION</b>	1020-970 B.C.	970-610 B.C.		Until 430 B.C.	

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# Walking and Talking with God

*Key Passage: Psalm 1*

PSALM 1	PSALM 2	PSALM 3	PSALMS 4-5	PSALM 6
God's Way	God's Rule	God's Help	Timely Prayers	Timely Answers
Walking with God			Talking with God	

**OVERVIEW** The Book of Psalms opens with a collection of foundation stones of the faith. The life-giving Word (Psalm 1) is the guidebook that the trustworthy Lord (2) will use to direct you into paths of blessing. The foundation of a righteous life is sure—even in times of seeming defeat (3), opposition (4), or woeful circumstances (5). The repentant believer has the confidence that God hears his prayer as soon as it's uttered (6). Morning and evening, through tears of joy and tears of grief, God's faithfulness is unchanging on behalf of His people.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Imagine how much grayer your life would be without music. No hymns of praise or songs of celebration, no majestic symphonies to remind you of the greatness and grandeur of God, no love songs to help you give expression to your feelings, no patriotic marches to rekindle your love for country, no bedside lullabies to soothe your child's restlessness, no tunes to whistle on the highway, no songs to sing in the shower, and no Christmas carols or Easter anthems.

*The singing of a hymn should be a conversation between friends.*

Take away music, and you have taken away one of the believer's vital channels of communication. The Book of Psalms is an inspired collection of songs—the overflow of human hearts experiencing grief and gladness, pain and praise. Read it as you would a journal, noticing the author's choice of words, looking for the emotions behind each carefully constructed phrase. As you do, frequently ask yourself, "Does this express the desire of my heart? The need of my life? The question on my mind?" And if you feel like breaking into a song from time to time, go ahead!

## **INSIGHT** Wherefore the Psalms?

The singing of psalms was a regular part of worship in the early church (1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Psalter, the common name for the 150 songs in the Book of Psalms, comes from a Latin word meaning "harp song." The Hebrew title, *Tehillim*, means "praises."

# Unanswered Prayer

*Key Passage: Psalm 10*

PSALM 7	PSALM 8	PSALM 9	PSALM 10	PSALMS 11-12
Slandered Servant	Crown of Creation	Righteous Judge	Wicked Oppressor	Assurance in Affliction
Justice	Jubilation	Judgment		

**OVERVIEW** Prominent in the Psalms is the request that God rescue His people, judge His enemies, and vindicate His righteousness. The man or woman of faith can rest assured that justice will ultimately prevail (7), the wicked will be brought low (9-10), and God's holy name will be exalted (8, 11-12). But in the meantime God is calling for restful confidence in Him as the One who can calm life's troubled waters.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** "Why, O LORD?" (10:1). What Christian hasn't asked that question, particularly when the wicked seem to prosper without punishment and God does nothing in answer to the prayers of His children?

In Psalm 10 the psalmist touches the nerve of this painful problem and probes for God's divine perspective on it. True, the proud and self-sufficient are prospering in their ways; true, they are seemingly getting away with murder; true, God has seemingly forgotten about bringing justice to bear (at least from the perspective of the wicked). But don't be lulled into following their wicked course. God has seen the injustice they commit; God has not overlooked their mischief and spite; the day of payment for their wickedness will come. And when it does, you will be glad you didn't walk with the wicked.

Are you struggling with feelings of bitterness toward God or revenge toward another person over an injustice you suffered at their hands? There are two paths you can follow: (1) Nurse your grudge and demand that God answer your *why*; or (2) turn your grudge over to God and in exchange find His strength to bear up under your sufferings. Read verses 16-18 out loud as your confident testimony that "the LORD is King."

*The heaviest load any man carries on his back is a pack of grudges.*

**INSIGHT** **What Do You Do When You See a Selah?**

The word *selah* occurs more than 70 times in the Book of Psalms and three more times elsewhere in the Old Testament (Habakkuk 3:3, 9, 13). It is probably the signal for an interlude or change of musical accompaniment. The Hebrew root means "to lift up," possibly indicating the place where the psalm should crescendo.

# A Man After God's Heart

*Key Passage: Psalm 15*

PSALM 13	PSALM 14	PSALM 15	PSALM 16	PSALM 17	PSALM 18
Sustaining Faith	A Fool's Folly	God's Standards	God's Preservation	God's Protection	God's Deliverance
In God's Service			In God's Care		

**OVERVIEW** Only a fool would say there is no God (14). But for those who acknowledge God's existence and seek to serve Him with a whole heart, there are benefits and blessings that the world knows nothing about: hope in times of anxiety (13); a holy standard (15); protection from the wicked (17); strength in times of peril (18); and best of all, the promise of eternal life (16).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** What are the responsibilities of a citizen of America? Answer: to protect, defend, and abide by the Constitution of the United States. What are the responsibilities of a citizen of heaven? Answer: to protect, defend, and abide by the Word of God.

Psalm 15 resembles in miniature form the Christian's Constitution. In it you will find a description of godliness to strive for. It provides a conduct manual to guide you into activities consistent with your citizenship.

There are 11 parts to the psalmist's answer, and they touch on virtually every area of daily life: integrity in speech and conduct (v. 2), use of the tongue (v. 3), attitude toward sin and worship (v. 4), faithfulness in keeping promises (v. 4), use of money (v. 5). In short, your fellowship with God is vitally affected by your obedience to the precepts contained in His Word.

Now apply the psalm to where you live and work. Every time you encounter "who . . ." in Psalm 15, substitute the words "Do I . . . ?" Let the mirror of God's Word reflect back to you an accurate picture of your conduct as a citizen of heaven.

**INSIGHT** *The Psalmist—and Prophet—David*

"The Psalmist David" is a phrase we hear often. But Acts 2:29-31 also speaks of David as a prophet who "spoke of the resurrection of the Christ" (v. 31). Psalm 18 is not just a song of thanksgiving; it also foretells Christ's experience of death and depicts God's power on Christ's behalf (vv. 1-18). Verses 19-27 tell of God raising Christ from the dead and giving Him glory.

*Heaven is a bargain, however great the cost.*

# INTRODUCTION TO THE Poetical Books

The poetical books, unlike the Pentateuch or the historical books, do not advance the story of the nation of Israel. Rather, they record the inner thoughts of men wrestling with personal, experiential issues of everyday life.

The poetical books deal with life in the present tense and seek to answer timeless questions: “What is God like? How can I relate to Him? What does He expect of me?” These books differ in both content and style from the historical books. They are poetry rather than prose, parallel thought rather than narrative.

The poetical books occur at the very center of the Old Testament and form the pivotal hinge linking the historical books (past) to the prophetical books (future), showing the lifestyle that pleases God—a lifestyle of dependence upon what God has done in the past and anticipation of what He will do in the future.

HISTORICAL (17)		POETICAL (5)	PROPHETICAL (17)	
PENTATEUCH (5)	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs	Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel	MAJOR PROPH. (5)
HISTORICAL (12)	Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther		Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	MINOR PROPHETS (12)

# The Psalm of the Cross

*Key Passage: Psalm 22*

PSALM 19	PSALMS 20-21	PSALM 22	PSALM 23	PSALM 24
God's Word	God's Salvation	God's Sacrifice	God's Shepherding	God's Splendor
The Plan of God		The Person of God		

**OVERVIEW** Today you will catch a glimpse of the many-sided plan and person of God. You will read about Him in His role as Creator (19) and Sustainer (20-21), the Lord who died as the Sacrifice for sin (22), lives as the Shepherd of the sheep (23), and rules as Sovereign over all that He has made (24). Truly He is worthy to be praised!

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Have you ever stood in line at the customer service counter of a department store listening to the arguments of a customer and clerk? It's a little like experiencing a ping-pong game with words:

"I thought this product was made of . . ."

"But ma'am, it says right on the label . . ."

"I know what it says, but the sales clerk told me . . ."

"There must have been a mistake, but I'm sure we can . . ."

No "buts" about it, they have a problem on their hands! It's a little like the problem the psalmist encountered when he allowed "buts" to cloud his trust in God. His complaints are spelled out in Psalm 22, verses 1-2, 6-8, and 12-18. But after each complaint there is a corresponding statement of confidence that God is bigger than his problem (vv. 3-5, 9-11, 19-21). Having seen God at work in the past, the psalmist realizes no problem is too big for God in the present or in the future as well.

In moments of crisis do you wrestle with the "God can do anything, but . . ." mentality? Remember today that there are no "buts" in God's promise to meet you at your point of need.

*Let God's promises shine on your problems.*

**INSIGHT** *Catching a Glimpse of the Cross*

Though Psalm 22 was penned about 1,000 years before Jesus was born, it contains a remarkable prophetic description of the Savior's death by crucifixion, including the details of His mockery, thirst, unbroken bones, pierced hands and feet, and broken heart. In addition, there are two verses in the psalm that would later be quoted on the day of Jesus' death: one spoken by Christ, the other spoken by the crowd. Can you locate both?

# A Cure for Intimidation

*Key Passage: Psalm 27*

PSALM 25	PSALM 26	PSALM 27	PSALM 28	PSALM 29	PSALM 30
The Lord Is My ...					
Teacher	Judge	Salvation	Rock	Glory	Uplifter
... to Instruct Me		... to Protect Me		... to Prosper Me	

**OVERVIEW** What is God like? How would you describe Him to someone who has never heard about Him? One good way would be to itemize the ways in which He works in your life. For example, He is your Teacher to instruct you (25), your Judge to vindicate you (26), your Salvation to save you (27), your Rock to defend you (28), your Glory to be worshiped by you (29), and your Uplifter to rescue you (30).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being low and 10 high, how would you rate your “fear quotient” on the following?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Fear of standing before a large group
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fear of snakes or lizards
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fear of the dark
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fear of the future

Fear, like acid, can destroy even the strongest resolve. That which terrifies you, controls you. But it needn't be that way. “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7).

David knew what it was to be afraid of the dark, afraid of the future, afraid of the enemies encamped all around him. But he learned the secret of overcoming those fears: not denying that he had fears, but relying on Someone bigger than they were. In Psalm 27:1, you'll discover what David found: The Lord is the cure for what intimidates you! He has light to dispel your darkness and strength to replace your weakness. And you, like David, have the privilege of drawing upon those resources today.

David took God at His word (27:5). Will you?

*“Do not be afraid.  
I am here.”  
—God*

**INSIGHT** *A Trio of Psalms About the Temple*

Psalms 26-28 are all written with the house of the Lord in view. In Psalm 26 the worshiper rejoices to find access to God's house; in Psalm 27 he sees God's house as a sanctuary from his enemies; and in Psalm 28 he spreads his hands toward the place of God's presence and there receives the answer to his petition.

# Forgiven and Forgiving

*Key Passage: Psalm 32*

PSALM 31	PSALM 32	PSALMS 33-34	PSALMS 35-36
From Gloom to Glory	From Pardon to Praise	From Creation to the Cave	From Affection to Affliction
Lament to the Lord		Light from the Lord	

**OVERVIEW** A proper perspective can help you face even the darkest of circumstances. The Book of Psalms was not written in a vacuum. Rather it was composed by godly Old Testament believers who wrestled with the same daily struggles you face: fear, guilt, loneliness, anxiety, need, and frustration. In God's strength, they discovered you can move from pity to praise (31-32) and from the cave to the mountaintop (33-34). Even in cases of unmerited hate, you can respond with unconditional love (35-36) when the Lord is your light and salvation.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** "Confession," the saying goes, "is good for the soul." More than that, confession is good for the entire person: body, soul, and spirit.

In Psalm 32, David describes the deep joy of a person who has experienced true forgiveness (vv. 1-2). Next, he lists some physical and emotional symptoms of harboring unconfessed sin (vv. 3-4). The psalmist pens a powerful prescription in verse 5: Confess your sins to the Lord. Uncover and expose your sin for what it is. Agree with God that it is in your life and doesn't belong there. Then receive God's forgiveness that washes your life like a cool, refreshing rain. What restoration awaits the repentant sinner (vv. 6-7)! Don't wait until you are forced to submit to God, David counsels, but willingly seek His mercies (vv. 8-11).

*Ours is the religion of the forgiven.*

Tape the words "Forgiven and Forgiving" to a clock. Let it remind you that because God has forgiven you in Christ Jesus, it's always the right time to forgive others (Ephesians 4:32).

**INSIGHT** *The ABCs of the Psalms*

On occasion, a Hebrew poet would write down the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and construct his psalm to correspond with them. In this way he would have a cohesive, easily remembered song that could then be sung from "A to Z." Such is the case—with minor variations—of Psalms 9-10, 25, 34, 37, 111-112, 119, and 145. (Notice how many are 22 verses—or a multiple of 22—in length.)



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS IN THE Titles

Refer to this page often as you read the superscriptions (titles) of the different psalms each day. It will give you valuable information regarding the author, historical background, musical setting, and use of the various psalms when they were written.

**Abimelech**—see 2 Samuel 11:21

**Absalom**—see 2 Samuel 16:15

**Ahimelech**—see 1 Samuel 22:9

**Aijeleth Shahar**—sung to the tune of “The Deer of the Dawn”

**Alamoth**—high-pitched voices

**Altaschith**—sung to the tune of “Do Not Destroy”

**Aram-naharaim**—Arameans of northwest Mesopotamia

**Aram-zobah**—Arameans of central Syria

**Asaph**—Levite, family of singers; see 2 Chronicles 5:12

**Bathsheba**—see 2 Samuel 12:1-14

**Choir Director**—conductor or chief musician in the temple

**Cush the Benjamite**—possibly Shimei; see 2 Samuel 16:5

**Doeg the Edomite**—see 1 Samuel 22:9

**Ethan the Ezrahite**—a wise man in the time of Solomon; see 1 Kings 4:31

**Gittith**—forerunner of the guitar

**Heman the Ezrahite**—Levite, family of singers; see 2 Chronicles 5:12

**Jeduthun**—chief musician in the temple; see 1 Chronicles 16:41

**Jonath-elem-rechokim**—sung to the tune of “A Silent Dove Far Away”

**Korah**—Levite, head of temple family of musicians

**Mahalath**—flutes

**Mahalath Leannoth**—flutes played in humiliation, mourning

**Maskil**—a song of wisdom or insight

**Miktam**—a song of deliverance or denunciation

**Muth-labben**—sung to the tune of “The Death of the Son” (or written on the occasion of the death of a son)

**Nathan**—see 2 Samuel 12:1-14

**Psalm**—religious song accompanied by a stringed instrument

**Sheminith**—lyre, 5-stringed harp

**Shiggaion**—a song of lament

**Shoshannim**—sung to the tune of “Over the Lilies”

**Shoshannim-eduth**—sung to the tune of “The Lilies”

**Shushan-eduth**—sung to the tune of “The Lily of the Testimony”

**Song of ascents**—sung during the festival processions to Jerusalem at harvest and New Year

**Song of love**—wedding song

**Sons of Korah**—musical Levitical family; see Exodus 6:24

**Valley of Salt**—south end of the Dead Sea

**Wilderness of Judah**—arid region in southern Judah near the Dead Sea

**Ziphites**—see 1 Samuel 23:19

# Cry of a Fretful Follower

*Key Passage: Psalm 37*

PSALM 37	PSALM 38	PSALMS 39-41
How to Deal with . . .		How to Rely upon God's Faithfulness
Fretfulness	Failing Strength	
Number Your Blessings		Number Your Days

**OVERVIEW** The five psalms you will read today, all authored by King David, provide a many-sided look at David's walk with God. While Israel's king often expressed praise to God, he also wrestled with fretfulness (37), failing strength (38-39), sinfulness (40), and the unfaithfulness of trusted friends (41). But for every situation of life, David found a source of support and strength that was inexhaustible and unchanging: the faithfulness of his covenant-keeping God.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** A major struggle that believers have faced through the ages is the seeming prosperity of the wicked. David struggled with this question, and in Psalm 37 suggested a course of action to deal with it. We could summarize his advice this way: "Look at the wicked in the light of eternity; live your life in the strength of today."

Begin by understanding the fate that awaits the ungodly: "Like the grass they will soon wither" (37:2); "Evil men will be cut off" (37:9); "The wicked will perish . . . they will vanish like smoke" (37:20). Their judgment is sure.

In the light of eternity, what does it matter if for a short time the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper? God will settle all accounts justly. And so David exhorts: "Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong" (37:1).

Instead of worrying about things we cannot change, David exhorts us to concentrate on attitudes we can change. "Trust in the LORD . . . delight yourself in the LORD . . . commit your way to the LORD . . . be still before the LORD and wait patiently . . . refrain from anger . . . do not fret" (vv. 3-8).

Pick one of the above commands and write out one way that you can develop that attitude in your life—starting today.

**INSIGHT** *Seven Penitent Prayers in the Psalter*

Psalm 38 is one of the seven so-called "penitential psalms"—those in which confession, repentance, and forgiveness are prominent themes. The other six (which you also might want to mark in your Bible) are Psalms 6, 32, 51, 102, 130, 143.

*If we truly  
knew what  
we were  
so anxious  
about, we  
wouldn't be  
so anxious.*

# Failure Turned to Victory

*Key Passage: Psalm 44*

PSALM 42	PSALM 43	PSALM 44	PSALM 45	PSALMS 46-48	PSALM 49
Longing for . . .			Relying on God in . . .		
God	Jerusalem	Victory	Majesty	Adversity	Prosperity
A Mighty Father			A Mighty Fortress		

**OVERVIEW** Today you will read a collection of psalms mostly attributed to the “Sons of Korah”—songs that express a longing for the nearness of God and the furthering of His program. Psalms 42-43 speak of a deep yearning for the Lord and for His house of worship, while Psalm 44 pleads with God to turn defeat into victory. The lament of the psalmist’s heart is answered in the remainder of the section, which speaks of God’s majesty (45), might (46-48), and wisdom (49). What is earthly wealth when compared to the awesome grandeur of God?

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Do you believe God was active when your grandparents were growing up? And your great-grandparents?

If that is true, then why is it so difficult to put into practice the wise words of Henry Ford? “Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.” God has something for you to learn from the previous generation, and only those growing old before their time will fail to learn it.

With that thought in mind, read thoughtfully and prayerfully the opening three verses of Psalm 44. How long has it been since you really listened to the distilled wisdom of the previous generation—the eloquent testimonies of God’s mighty works on their behalf? If the answer is “too long,” then you’ve been missing a treat.

Invite a Christian senior citizen to your house this week for dinner or dessert. Then settle back and listen!

**INSIGHT** Psalms 151, 152, 153 . . .

It may surprise you to learn there are other psalms outside the Book of Psalms. Here is a partial list:

“The Song of Moses”	Deuteronomy 32:1-43
“Deborah’s Song”	Judges 5:1-31
“Hannah’s Prayer”	1 Samuel 2:1-10
“A Poem by Hezekiah”	Isaiah 38:9-20
“Jonah’s Prayer”	Jonah 2:1-9

*As a man  
grows older  
and wiser,  
he talks  
less and  
says more.*

# A Fool's Reply

*Key Passage: Psalm 53*

PSALM 50	PSALM 51	PSALM 52	PSALM 53	PSALM 54
A Cry for Justice	A Cry for Cleansing	A Treacherous Tongue	A Fool's Folly	A Divine Defense
Confessing Sin			Counteracting Sin	

**OVERVIEW** God is the righteous Judge (50), and those who call themselves His people must view wickedness from His perspective. Sin is something to be confessed and forsaken (51); the tongue is often a tool of wickedness (52); the pursuit of evil is folly (53); but God is the Helper and Deliverer of those who rely on Him (54).

*There is nothing by which an individual displays his character so much as in what he considers foolish.*

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Here are some wise words about fools:

- If fifty million people say a foolish thing, it is still foolish.
- A fool and his money are soon parted. Then again, a fool and his money were lucky to get together in the first place!
- No one can make a fool out of a person if he isn't the right kind of material for the job.

We smile at such humorous maxims. But here is another wise statement about fools that we dare not take lightly:

- "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (53:1).

Only a fool would deny God's existence, the problem of sin, and the need for a Savior. Paul, in Romans 3:10-12, shows that sin is the universal malignancy of humanity. There is none righteous, understanding, seeking after God, doing good—no, not one. That's why it's so important to be sure you have "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ" (Romans 3:22). Only a fool would try to make it on his own merits when the only way has already been provided by God.

Have you wisely reached out to Jesus as your Savior or foolishly sought to save yourself? There is no other way than through Jesus Christ. No fooling.

**INSIGHT** *Not a Rerun Already!*

Psalm 53 is almost identical to Psalm 14 that you read only one week ago. Compare the two chapters. The primary difference is the use of the word *God* instead of the word *LORD*. In Hebrew this represents use of the word *Elohim* instead of *Yahweh*. The other main difference is found in verse 5.

# A Bottle Full of Tears

*Key Passage: Psalm 56*

PSALM 55	PSALM 56	PSALM 57	PSALM 58	PSALM 59
Traitorous Friend	Tears in a Bottle	Prayer in Peril	Tyrants on Trial	Prayer While Pursued
Praise and Petition in Good Times and Bad				

**OVERVIEW** Is it possible to praise God, even in the midst of trials (57-59), tears (56), and betrayal by trusted friends (55)? David would respond with a ringing “Yes!” With an unshakable trust in God, it is possible to praise Him even in the face of cruel and treacherous dealings from friends and enemies alike. In each psalm you read today, note the way David’s plea in the midst of crisis gives way to an expression of praise in the midst of confidence.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** What do Psalm 56 and a penny have in common? They both bear the message, “In God We Trust.”

In the space of these 13 verses, David repeats the phrase “in God” or its equivalent a total of six times, not because the psalmist has a limited vocabulary, but because trust in God is the focus of his hope. Like a brilliant jewel, David holds up his confidence in God and slowly turns it to reveal the many facets of his faith. Even under enemy attack, in the midst of fearful circumstances, when tears flow in the solitude of his suffering—through it all, God is with him and for him (56:9).

That may be just the message of hope you need to face the challenge God has set before you. Tape a few pennies in unusual places as a reminder. Trust in the Lord, for He is for you!

**INSIGHT** *Doubly Trapped, Doubly Trusting*

Don’t miss the historical context behind Psalm 56, as noted in the superscription. It was written “when the Philistines had seized him [David] in Gath”—an event described in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. While fleeing from the murderous pursuit of King Saul, David made his way in desperation to the city of Gath, a Philistine stronghold and home town of the recently deceased Goliath. Already a marked man in Saul’s book, David now found himself on the “Ten Most Wanted List” in Philistia. Doubly encircled by those who wished to see him dead, David picked up pen and parchment to write these moving refrains.

*No enemy  
can come  
so near that  
God is not  
nearer.*

# The Rock Higher Than I

*Key Passage: Psalm 61*

PSALM 60	PSALM 61	PSALM 62	PSALM 63	PSALMS 64-65	PSALM 66
God, My Help	God, My High Rock	God, My Defense	Seeking for God	Supplication to God	Singing to God
Standing on God's Promise			Shouting Forth God's Praises		

**OVERVIEW** In time of distress, the best place to be standing is on the promises of God, for there you can never be moved. In the face of defeat and discouragement, God has promised to be your Help (60), your Strong Tower (61), and your Rock (62). No wonder David bursts forth in praise for his praiseworthy Lord! God will satisfy the thirsty (63) and deliver the downcast (64-65)—surely cause to shout His mighty acts to all the earth (66).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Psalm 61 contains only eight brief verses. But buried in the psalm are word pictures describing five kinds of protection for the psalmist. Can you find all five in less than a minute? Ready? . . . go!

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*If the Father  
has the  
kingdom  
ready for  
us, He will  
take care  
of us along  
the way.*

Rocks and towers may not seem like anything special until you remember the terrain in which David lived and fought—much of it parched, waterless wilderness, without trees for shade or many cities for protection. In such an environment, every promontory is of vital importance for shade, defense, observation, and protection.

Find your own observation point (an upstairs window, scenic view, or high-rise building) as you meditate on this thought: "If you're doing all right under the circumstances, you could be doing a lot better under His wing." That is the heritage of those who fear God's name (61:4-5); make it your heritage today as well.

**INSIGHT** *A Moving Hymn from the End of the Earth*  
Psalm 61:2 prompted William O. Cushing to compose the well-known hymn, "Hiding in Thee," the first verse of which reads:

*O safe to the Rock that is higher than I,  
My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly.  
So sinful, so weary—Thine, Thine would I be;  
Thou blest "Rock of Ages," I'm hiding in Thee.*

# The Senior Citizen's Psalm

## Key Passage: Psalm 71

PSALM 67	PSALM 68	PSALM 69	PSALM 70	PSALM 71	PSALM 72
Praise on Earth	Praise in Zion	A Plea in Persecution	Help in a Hurry	Hope for the Elderly	Hail to God's Anointed
God Is Praiseworthy			God Is Powerful		

**OVERVIEW** The six psalms you will read today provide ample reason to take time to praise. God is big enough to rule the affairs of nations (67) and ride on the clouds of heaven (68), yet small enough to tend to the hurts of His people (69-71). Truly He is worthy of your worship and adoration as King over creation (72).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Aging is a paradox. For the first twenty years we can't grow up fast enough. During the middle years we're appalled at how time flies. And for the last twenty years, time stands still.

With an average of 80 or more years to serve in the family of God, what is God's purpose for those crowning years? Where can the senior saint turn for strength and security? And how can he or she find meaningful service?

Psalm 71 shows that for every need experienced by the elderly, God can richly supply that need. Security? "You are my rock and my fortress" (71:3). Hope? "You have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD" (71:5). Stamina? "I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD" (71:16 KJV). Encouragement? "You will . . . comfort me once again" (71:21). Purpose for living? "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" (71:18).

Read Psalm 71 again thoughtfully. Then write an encouraging note to a senior citizen you know, sharing God's love for him or her.

*To grow old is to pass from passion to compassion.*

### INSIGHT Four Ways to Praise

At the conclusion of Psalm 71, the psalmist looks for ways to exalt the name of the Lord, even in his crowning years, and he discovers four. Can you find them in verses 22-24?

"I will \_\_\_\_\_ praise you with the harp."

"I will \_\_\_\_\_ to you with a lyre."

"My lips will \_\_\_\_\_ for joy when I sing praise to you."

"My tongue will \_\_\_\_\_ your righteous acts all day long."

# What's Good About the Old Days?

*Key Passage: Psalm 77*

PSALM 73	PSALM 74	PSALM 75	PSALM 76	PSALM 77
Slippery Way of the Wicked	Savage Way of the Wicked	Warning to the Wicked	Magnifying God's Might	Battling the Blues
Why the Wicked Prosper			How the Righteous Persevere	

**OVERVIEW** Asaph, composer of the five psalms you will read today, struggles with some of the most difficult questions of life: Why do the wicked prosper (73, 75)? Why do the righteous suffer (74)? Why do prayers seemingly go unanswered (77)? In the midst of fear and uncertainty, Asaph discovers there is an immovable Rock.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** How do you respond when your thoughts turn to memories of the past? Is it a painful experience? Do you find yourself longing for the good old days?

Memories of the past play a vital role in Asaph's thinking as he records Psalm 77. Lying on his bed at night and anxiously searching for God's comfort (vv. 1-6), he finds himself asking, "God, have You changed? Are You still interested in me and my personal problems?" But then Asaph remembers God's works down through history (vv. 10-12): His redemption of the nation from bondage, His guidance of the people through the Red Sea, His provision of food and water where there was none. And suddenly, aided by his good memory of God's past dealings, Asaph finds his self-pity turned to praise.

Have you been battling the blues lately? Here's a divine remedy that worked for Asaph and one that will work for you, too. Think back over yesterday, and identify at least one good thing God did for you. Now do the same with last week, last month, and last year. If your memory fails, enlist the help of your spouse, children, parent, or friend. Tie a string around your finger to remind you throughout the rest of the day to "remember the deeds of the LORD" (v. 11).

**INSIGHT** *Putting Together a Profile of Asaph's Life*

According to 1 Chronicles 25:1, Asaph and his sons were skillful players of the harp, lyre, and cymbals. Asaph was an accomplished singer, according to 1 Chronicles 15:16, 19. In 1 Chronicles 25:6, we are told that Asaph was under the king's direct supervision for the music of the Lord's temple. Asaph also wrote many psalms.

*If you want the future to be different from the present, study the past.*



# Profiting from the Past

*Key Passage: Psalm 78*

PSALM 78	PSALM 79	PSALMS 80-81	PSALMS 82-83
Learn from God's Dealings	Wait for Deliverance	Turn Back to God	Turn Away from False Gods
Learning of God		Turning to God	

**OVERVIEW** Rounding out the psalms of Asaph (50, 73-83) are six testimonies to God's greatness. Psalm 78, the second longest psalm in the Bible, is filled with lessons from Israel's history; Psalm 79 draws painful lessons from the destruction of Jerusalem; Psalm 80 provides a moving prayer for the restoration of God's chastened people. In the face of affliction and injustice, the believer in God can still sing for joy (81), for he knows that God rules in the affairs of humans (82-83).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Are you profiting from the mistakes of the past generation, or are you destined to repeat them?

Psalm 78 contains "dark sayings of old" regarding rebellious decisions and their painful consequences for the people of God. You'll find the psalm depressing, because God never whitewashes the bad conduct of His children. But in spite of Israel's failings and faithlessness, God remains faithful. Time after time, He demonstrates that a disciplining Father can also be a loving Father.

Parents, do your children ever see you fail? Do they ever hear about the times when you disobeyed your Father in heaven, felt His hand of discipline, and learned to love Him more because of the experience? Don't hide your frailties; learn from them. And allow your children to do the same. In this way you can show "the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done . . . so the next generation would know them . . . and would not forget his deeds" (78:4, 6-7).

Your children will follow your footsteps more easily than they will follow your advice, particularly in the matter of learning from past failures. Turn bedtime into an opportunity to help your children profit from one of your past mistakes.

*Never make the mistake of claiming you have never made a mistake.*

**INSIGHT** *Whatever Happened to Ephraim?*

Until the time of David, Ephraim was the most powerful of the twelve tribes. But Ephraim repeatedly disobeyed God (78:9-66). Thus God chose Judah instead, making a city of Judah (Jerusalem) the capital, and a man of Judah (David) the king.

# God's Persistent Promises

*Key Passage: Psalm 89*

PSALM 84	PSALM 85	PSALM 86	PSALM 87	PSALMS 88-89
Dwelling with God	Dwelling on God	"Teach Me; God"	City of God	Safety in God
God's Presence		God's Promises		

**OVERVIEW** Four authors penned the psalms you will read today, and the subject matter is as diverse as the composers. Korah yearns for a place in the house of the Lord (84) and for God to restore His favor to His people (85) so that the greatness of God may be displayed in the city of God (87). David seeks the Lord's joy and restoration in the midst of opposition (86). Heman cries from the doorstep of death for God to come to his rescue (88). And Ethan bursts into song at the thought of God's faithfulness (89).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** If someone makes a promise to you, and then circumstances change, making it seemingly impossible for that person to keep his word, you are faced with a choice: you can either let your problems cast a shadow on his promise, or allow his promise to shed light on your problems. It all depends on the trustworthiness of your promise-maker.

God made a promise to David (89:3-4) that's recorded in 2 Samuel 7:13-16. God promised David an everlasting house, throne, and kingdom. Yet, at times it appeared David's family line was doomed. On at least two occasions the "royal family" was reduced to but a single member (2 Chronicles 21:4; 22:10-12). Did that mean God's promise was faulty? Not at all! It only highlighted the importance of daily faith in the Promise-Giver.

Label one side of a sheet of paper "God's Unkept Promises"; the other, "Promises God Made—and Kept." Then do your own survey of Noah, Abraham, Jonah, and others. What did they discover about the promises of God? Does that shed light on God's promises for you?

**INSIGHT** *Bethlehem? Don't You Mean Jerusalem?*

The fulfillment of the Davidic covenant is accurate in every detail. Isaiah 7:13-15 speaks to the "house of David" (v. 13) regarding the sign that the Lord Himself will give: "The virgin will be with child" (v. 14). Isaiah 9:6-7 foretells that a child will be born to reign upon David's throne. Micah predicts the very town in which this child will be born: the city of David—Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

*Never doubt  
in the dark  
what God  
told you in  
the light.*

## MEET THE Authors

Of the 150 psalms, 102 are linked to authors either by the superscription (title) that precedes the psalm or by New Testament passages. At least seven different poets contributed to the Book of Psalms. Here is a summary of their names and chief contributions to Jewish history.

**David ("beloved"):** Second king of Israel. Lived about 1000 B.C. Most prolific psalmist with 75 psalms attributed to him.

**Asaph ("collector"):** A Levite from the family of Gershon. Eminent musician. Appointed by David to preside over the sacred choral services. His sons were choristers of the temple. Twelve psalms bear his name.

**Korah ("baldness"):** A Levite and grandson of Kohath. Ancestor of a group of sacred musicians to whom 12 psalms are addressed. Possibly the same individual who rebelled against Moses and Aaron.

**Solomon ("peaceable"):** Son of David. Third king of Israel. Prolific writer of songs and proverbs. Two psalms (72, 127) bear his name.

**Ethan ("permanent"):** A Levite of the family of Merari. Appointed by David as one of the leaders of the temple music. It is likely that Ethan the singer, Ethan the Ezrahite, and Jeduthun are one and the same person. Psalm 89 is credited to him.

**Heman ("faithful"):** Levite from the family of Kohath. Grandson of Samuel the prophet. Another of David's appointed leaders of temple music. Had 14 sons and 3 daughters. One psalm (88) is ascribed to him.

**Moses ("drawn out"):** Deliverer of God's people from Egyptian bondage. Lived about 1400 B.C. Received the Law on Mt. Sinai. Psalm 90 bears his ascription.

# Resting in God's Shadow

*Key Passage: Psalm 91*

PSALM 90	PSALM 91	PSALMS 92-93	PSALM 94	PSALMS 95-96	PSALM 97
The God of . . .		A People for . . .			
Eternity	Refuge	Greatness	Goodness	Rejoicing	Righteousness
Works of God			Worship of God		

**OVERVIEW** The psalmist knew a God of incomparable greatness—a God of eternity (90), security (91), righteousness (92), sovereignty (93), and vengeance (94). Surely He is worthy of worship (95) and exaltation (96), for He is far above all other so-called gods (97).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Transport yourself mentally from the place where you are sitting to a distant and sultry desert. The sun is your fiercest foe, and a shady spot your most desired friend. But as far as the eye can see, there are no trees, no caves, and no shady places of refuge. Then suddenly you remember a secret place—a haven that the casual eye might miss. And there, protected from the heat, you find shade and shelter.

God's love is like that—a haven; a refuge; a shady spot in the noon-day afflictions of life. Perhaps that's just the breath of fresh air you need today to persevere in your service for Him. If so, then "take five" in the shadow of the Almighty (91:1-2) as you look for and circle the six "I will's" that God has promised in 91:14-16 for the objects of His love.

Be refreshed in His presence today!

*Trusting  
in the Lord  
is one  
habit you  
will never  
outgrow.*

**INSIGHT** *Bridging the Chasm of a Chiasmus*

Moses, like other psalmists, was a master of the chiasmic or stair-step poem—one in which the psalmist builds to a climax, then reverses directions in the middle and repeats himself using synonyms. Psalm 90:1-2 is an excellent example.

- A Lord
- B You have been our dwelling place
- C Throughout all generations
- D Before the mountains
- E Were born
- E Or you brought forth
- D The earth and the world
- C From everlasting to everlasting
- B You are
- A God

# A Blameless Life, Heart, and Walk

*Key Passage: Psalm 101*

PSALM 98	PSALM 99	PSALM 100	PSALM 101	PSALM 102	PSALM 103
Sing to the Lord	Exalt the Lord	Serve the Lord	Vows to the Lord	Cry to the Lord	Bless the Lord
Blessings from God			Blessings for God		

**OVERVIEW** In today's section you'll discover songs of affection and affliction: "Sing to the LORD a new song" (98); "The LORD reigns" (99); "Shout for joy to the LORD" (100); "I will sing . . . to you, O LORD" (101); "Hear my prayer, O LORD" (102); "Praise the LORD, O my soul" (103).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** David knew from reading the Old Testament Law that holiness was to be the hallmark of his administration. Why? Because the character of David's God radiated mercy and justice. But it wasn't enough to know that truth. David had to search for practical ways to implement that truth in his daily decisions as king. That's what Psalm 101 is all about. He wanted each habit and activity, each friend and employee to reflect the primary focus of his life—the holiness and purity of God.

Is that the goal of your Christian life as well? Blameless behavior; a blameless heart; a blameless walk with God (vv. 2, 6)? Does your commitment to holiness filter down to affect your reading habits, TV viewing, choice of friends, integrity on the job, and selection of leisure-time activities?

Holiness in personal and professional life was not a one-time decision for David, but a daily pursuit. "Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked [influences] in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the LORD" (v. 8). As one commentator has described it, David nurtured a king's concern for a clean administration, honest from the top down. What is one way that you can build on David's godly example today so that wholeness and holiness characterize your walk with God?

*To be holy  
is to be like  
Jesus.*

## **INSIGHT** The Politician's Psalm

Here's a challenge for you. Write a short note to your congressman, governor, or mayor, enclosing a copy of Psalm 101 as a statement of your commitment to godliness in government.

# God's Favor

*Key Passage: Psalm 106*

PSALM 104	PSALM 105	PSALM 106
God's Manifold Nature	God's Consistent Favor	Israel's Consistent Failure
God's Work in Creation	God's Work in History	

**OVERVIEW** The evidence of God's greatness is visible everywhere: in the natural world He has created (104), in His daily provision for His nation Israel (105), and in His patient dealings with His wayward and stiff-necked people (106). As the songwriter has stated, "He's big enough to rule this mighty universe, yet small enough to live within my heart!"

**YOUR DAILY WALK** In a well-known poem titled, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the poet depicts the plight of some ancient voyagers whose ship has drifted off course. A beautiful seabird, the albatross, accompanies the ship and brings favorable winds—a good omen. But when one of the sailors shoots the bird with a crossbow, the winds die along with the albatross. The dead bird is hung around the neck of the guilty sailor as a constant reminder of his foolish error.

Israel, too, could have hung a dead albatross around her neck as a reminder of her frequent (and tragic) mistakes. In Psalm 106 the psalmist first confesses the sins of the nation during the period of Egyptian bondage (vv. 1-6). Next, he moves on to the nation's rebellion during the wilderness wanderings (vv. 7-33). And he concludes with the sins of the people in the land of promise (vv. 34-39). Yet in each case, God forgave His people and restored their fortunes (vv. 8-12, 23, 30-31, 44-46).

What albatross do you have around your neck? What sin from the past sneaks up to haunt you? Read Psalm 106:8, 44. Then underline the word yet and complete this statement: "Even though I have \_\_\_\_\_, yet God has forgiven me." Fill in the blank with a mistake from the past, and realize that you've been forgiven.

**INSIGHT** *A Psalmist's Paraphrase of Genesis 1:1–2:3* Psalm 104 closely parallels the seven days of creation found in Genesis 1-2. Notice how each section of the psalm acts as a free translation of the corresponding passage in Genesis. Can you match up all seven days of creation?

*The unforgivable sin is the sin of rejecting forgiveness.*

# A Song Amidst Stress

*Key Passage: Psalm 108*

PSALM 107	PSALM 108	PSALM 109	PSALM 110
A Song of the Redeemed	A Song of the Steadfast	A Song of the Slandered	A Scepter from Zion
Rejoicing	Recounting	Reminding	Ruling

**OVERVIEW** God's goodness gives the redeemed cause to sing (107); God's faithfulness provides hope in times of helplessness (108); God's justice shows that the joy of the wicked is short-lived (109); and God's majesty puts human history in sharp perspective (110). In short, *When the wicked prevail, the righteous can sing*  
*By simply recalling the Lord is King!*

**YOUR DAILY WALK** How do you react under stressful circumstances? Do you find yourself panicky or peaceful? Helpful or helpless? Productive or paralyzed?

Now consider this: King David—a man to whom stress was no stranger—found that in God's strength you can hold up rather than fold up in even the most pressurized situation. That's no idle boast; it is the testimony of his life.

Has your life ever hung in the balance? David's did—in the palace, in the cave, and on the battlefield.

Have you ever been misunderstood to the point where people hurled abuses your way? David was.

Have you ever faced a giant-sized problem, knowing that when the dust settled either the problem would be licked—or you would? David could identify with that feeling.

But in spite of such stress-filled moments, David could still write a song like Psalm 108—a song of confident trust, combining the best elements of Psalm 57 (when David was on the run) and Psalm 60 (when he was reeling from the pain of defeat in battle). In God's strength, he stood up to both, and so can you!

*The best exercise for keeping stress from becoming distress is kneeling often.*

**INSIGHT** *God's Strength in Stressful Times*

Identify the stress test being experienced in . . .

Psalm 73 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 78 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 91 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 108 \_\_\_\_\_

How will you respond to God's "stress test" in your life?

## DAILY WALK FROM THE Psalms

According to the Jewish Talmud, in Old Testament times the offering of the morning sacrifice was accompanied by the singing of a psalm from the Psalter. The priests and musicians selected psalms to remind the worshipers of the seven days of creation and sang them on the corresponding day of the week.

Can you recall what God created on each of the seven days? Refresh your memory by rereading the Genesis account.

DAY OF THE WEEK AND CREATION	A SUGGESTED PSALM TO BE SUNG	CORRESPONDING PASSAGE IN THE CREATION ACCOUNT
Day One	Psalm 24	Genesis 1:1-5
Day Two	Psalm 147	Genesis 1:6-8
Day Three	Psalm 95	Genesis 1:9-13
Day Four	Psalm 136	Genesis 1:14-19
Day Five	Psalm 8	Genesis 1:20-23
Day Six	Psalm 139	Genesis 1:24-31
Day Seven	Psalm 92	Genesis 2:1-3



# The Folly of Idols

*Key Passage: Psalm 115*

PSALMS 111-112	PSALMS 113-114	PSALM 115	PSALM 116	PSALMS 117-118
Praise for God's . . .				
Care	Power	Presence	Deliverance	Goodness
"Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples" (117:1).				

**OVERVIEW** Think of the collection of psalms you will be reading today as a “praise package”—praise for God’s care (111), God’s commands (112), God’s compassion (113), God’s power (114), God’s help (115), God’s goodness (116), God’s faithfulness (117), and God’s enduring love (118). From the cradle to the grave, there is ample reason to praise the Lord.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** How many “Gods” are there in the world? \_\_\_\_ How many “gods” are there in your life? \_\_\_\_

The answer to the first question is simple. There is only one God: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4). “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none is like me” (Isaiah 46:9).

The second question is more difficult because it asks you to search your life for idols that have no place there. In Psalm 115 the psalmist chides his readers for worshiping gods made by men’s hands—gods that cannot speak, see, hear, smell, feel, or walk. His conclusion: “Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them” (115:8). By contrast the God of Israel is the Help and Shield of His people; the Provider of every blessing; the Possessor of heaven and earth. What other god is equal to Him?

The folly of idols is a sobering reminder, not just for Old Testament Israelites but for New Testament Christians as well. Is there some work of human hands that has become the focus of your time and affection? It can be a car, a club, a sport, or an investment. Verse 8 provides an exhortation; verse 11 offers an invitation. Will you turn from your false god—and back to your true God—right now? It’s never wise to follow folly.

*An idol is any person or thing that has usurped in one’s heart the pre-eminence that belongs to the Lord.*

**INSIGHT** *Psalms, the Heartbeat of the Bible*

Psalms is literally at the heart of the Bible. The middle chapter of the Bible is Psalm 117. The middle verse of the Bible is Psalm 118:8—“It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.”

# God's Word from A to Z

*Key Passage: Psalm 119:1-11, 97-105*

## PSALM 119

Praising God's Word in 22 Stanzas

"I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word" (v. 16).

**OVERVIEW** Psalm 119, the longest psalm and longest chapter in the Bible, spotlights the multifaceted Word of God. Using a dozen synonyms for God's Word, the psalmist magnifies the law of God and the God of the law in virtually all of the psalm's 176 verses. Just as the reading of Psalm 119 seems to go on forever, so your praise and love for God's matchless Word should be your eternal preoccupation.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** If someone were to walk up to you on the street, thrust a microphone into your hand, and ask, "In your opinion what is the Word of God?", how would you respond?

If our "man on the street" had accidentally picked the psalmist who wrote Psalm 119, he would have received more of an answer than he bargained for. The psalmist describes God's Word as law to be obeyed; testimony to be shared; the way to be followed; precept to be kept; statute to be observed; command that carries responsibility; judgment that rules between right and wrong; word that God has authoritatively spoken; promise that carries reward.

But Psalm 119 was not given as an exercise in reading. Rather, it is in the Bible to give you exercise in walking as you translate its eternal truths into the daily disciplines of life: your business decisions, your response to authority, your choice of counselors, your approach to times of testing and discouragement. Before beginning your Bible reading today, write across the top of a sheet of paper, "My Most Pressing Problem." Write out your thoughts. Then as you read Psalm 119, compile a list of the principles and precepts the psalmist shares that speak directly to your situation.

**INSIGHT** *The Long and the Short of It*

Only one chapter separates the shortest chapter in the Bible from the longest! Psalm 117 is the middle chapter of the Bible, and also the shortest, having only two verses. Contrast that with today's chapter, which has 176 verses—and is thus 88 times longer than chapter 117.

*There are many ways to read the Bible, but cover-to-cover is best.*

# Weeping and Reaping

*Key Passage: Psalm 126*

PSALM 120	PSALM 121	PSALMS 122-123	PSALMS 124-125	PSALM 126	PSALM 127
The Pilgrim's . . .					
Peace	Protection	Plea	Helper	Restorer	Reliance
"The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life" (121:7).					

**OVERVIEW** Psalms 120-134 are called "songs of ascents" sung by Jewish travelers on the way up to the Jerusalem temple for the annual days of festival. These hymns of the highway reflect the thoughts of a pilgrim traveling far from home and looking for peace, protection, and provision along the journey.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Homecoming brings a remarkable feeling—the feeling of being back where you belong, back where the family is together and the surroundings are familiar. Only those who have been away from home for long periods of time can appreciate the feeling.

Psalm 126 describes a homecoming. God's people, absent from their land of blessing and promise, have come home at last. It is like a dream come true—unspeakable joy punctuated by laughter, singing, and tears of gladness. The pilgrims have returned!

But lest the emotions of the moment sweep you away, don't miss the principle the psalmist underscores: "He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him" (126:6). The agony of waiting, like the toil of the farmer, will one day bear fruit. Your tears and toil—as a parent, a Sunday school teacher, a faithful employee, a praying neighbor—will one day produce a harvest. God has staked His reputation on it. So rejoice! Sing! Laugh! And dream just a little as you labor for the Lord. Weeping will turn to reaping at the harvest.

*Believe there  
is nothing  
too small  
to do well.*

**INSIGHT** *What Goes Down (to Jerusalem), Must Come Up!*

The old city of Jerusalem is located on a hill rising 2,600 feet above sea level. Because of its elevation, pilgrims arriving for the festivals of Passover, Pentecost, or Booths would go "up to Jerusalem," regardless of the direction from which they were arriving. Thus Jesus, traveling "down" from Capernaum (in the north) to Jerusalem (in the south), was still going "up" (John 2:12-13).

# Home Life of the Pilgrim

*Key Passage: Psalm 128*

PSALM 128	PSALM 129	PSALM 130	PSALMS 131-132	PSALM 133	PSALM 134
The Pilgrim's . . .					
Rewarder	Rescuer	Redeemer	Confidence	Unity	Blessing
Walking with God			Walking with the Servants of God		

**OVERVIEW** Walking to the temple, the pilgrim contemplates the blessings of walking with the God of the temple. Whether with family (128) or foes (129), in the midst of cries (130) or quiet moments (131), in the house of God (132, 134) or among the people of God (133), it is good to praise the Lord, for that is the pilgrim's most joyous privilege.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Which does your home most closely resemble: (a) the eye of the hurricane, or (b) the hurricane itself?

Psalm 128 describes a family scene, with father, mother (the fruitful vine), and children (olive plants) assembled around the table. It's a picture of tranquility, harmony, and stability. And at first it may be a scene you have trouble envisioning at your house. (As one harried mom described it, "Getting my kids to sit still at the dinner table is like trying to nail jelly to the floor!")

*Children  
may tear  
up a house,  
but they  
never break  
up a home.*

But don't miss the point of the psalm. The psalmist is not trying to turn your dining room into a setting for *Better Homes and Gardens*, but rather to show you the path to true happiness in the home. Even in the midst of chaotic schedules, you can find satisfaction and stability as a family if you will keep uppermost these three things: reverence (fearing the Lord, v. 1a), obedience (walking in His ways, v. 1b), and perseverance (laboring to make it work at any price, v. 2).

This evening, call a family council to discuss ways to put Psalm 128 to work in your home. God has a blessing for your family if only you will follow the blueprint. Will you commit yourself to reverence, obedience, and perseverance in your home?

**INSIGHT** *Fifteen Psalms for Fifteen Steps*

According to the *Mishnah* (the body of Jewish tradition compiled about A.D. 200), 15 steps led up from the Court of the Women to the Court of the Israelites in the Jerusalem temple, and these corresponded "to the fifteen Songs of the Ascents in the Psalms, [which] the Levites used to sing."

# The Everywhere, Everything God

*Key Passage: Psalm 139*

PSALM 135	PSALM 136	PSALM 137	PSALMS 138-139
Praise for God's Greatness	Thanks for God's Enduring Love	Tears in Exile	Thanks for God's Presence
"Bless the Lord"	"Give Thanks"	"Save Me"	"Search Me"

**OVERVIEW** Sometimes it is easy to praise the Lord simply by recalling the past (135-136); at other times memories of the past produce more pain than praise (137). But even times of tears and troubles can produce shouts of praise to God for His loyal love (138) and His infinite knowledge and presence (139).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Nothing is quite as comforting—and at the same time quite as disconcerting—as the truth that God knows everything.

He knows your thoughts, your actions, and your words. He knows when you get up and when you go to bed. He understands your motives and intentions even when no one else does.

He also knows your secret sins that no one else ever sees: pride, lust, jealousy, covetousness. And He holds you accountable for all of it.

Similarly, God's presence can be both a comfort and a concern. There is no mountain you can climb, or depth you can descend, where He is not there. His presence shines through the darkness and transcends distance. But at the same time, that puts the lie to rest of any notion of secret sins you can commit without His being there. His presence with you is persistent.

God knows you completely and He still wants to accompany you everywhere you go. That's loyal love! What should be your response to the knowledge that "God knows me; God goes everywhere with me; God created me to be the unique person that I am"?

The last two verses of Psalm 139 will tell you. Make them your prayer of commitment as you close your devotional time today.

*God knows everything about us, but He still loves us.*

**INSIGHT** Psalm 139 in a Nutshell (Four Stanzas of Six Verses)

- Verses 1-6: God knows all about me.
- Verses 7-12: God goes everywhere with me.
- Verses 13-18: God made me.
- Verses 19-24: God, search me!

# A People of Praise

*Key Passage: Psalm 145*

PSALM 140	PSALM 141	PSALM 142	PSALMS 143-144	PSALM 145
A Prayer for . . .				A Proclamation of Praise
Protection	Purity	Power	Provision	
Exclamation ("Help!")				Exaltation

**OVERVIEW** Your enemies will either drive you from God or cause you to walk closer to God. As the psalmist finds himself surrounded by those who would harm him, he cries out to be rescued (140), avenged (141), sustained (142), acquitted (143), and delivered (144). Truly God is great and glorious, a fact deserving to be acknowledged and broadcast by all His creatures (145).

**YOUR DAILY WALK** How many times did you worship God last week? Perhaps your first reaction to that question was to count how often you attended church: Sunday morning worship, Sunday evening, mid-week . . . but read Psalm 145 and you'll come away with a totally different picture of what it means to worship God. In verse 2, David describes worship as the daily joy of his life: "Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever." If David were alive today, this psalm might read something like this: "All through my day, as I drive on the road, work in the office, meet with clients, tend to the home, my thoughts will be on You and Your praiseworthy actions for me."

*What we worship determines in large measure what we become.*

Worship can take place even when you are nowhere near a church. You can worship God with your children at bedtime (145:4), or declare His greatness on a crowded bus to those who do not even know Him (145:11-12). And if you think you've exhausted your thoughts about God or run out of things to worship Him for, remember verse 3: "His greatness no one can fathom."

Using one of David's suggestions from Psalm 145, spend a few minutes right now worshipping God.

**INSIGHT** *A Fitting and Final Volley of Praise*

Psalms 144-150 conclude the Psalter with a crescendo of praise. Psalms 144-146 are examples of personal praise (employing the pronouns I, me, and my); Psalms 147-150 contain corporate praise, imploring the nation as a whole to join in the chorus and "praise the Lord!"

# Praise for the Praiseworthy God

*Key Passage: Psalm 150*

PSALM 146	PSALM 147	PSALM 148	PSALM 149	PSALM 150
	Praise the Lord, O . . .			
My Soul	Israel	All Creation	His People	Everywhere
"Let everything that has breath praise the LORD" (150:6).				

**OVERVIEW** The psalmist's emotions have ridden a roller coaster in the psalms you have read thus far—from the pit of depression to the pinnacle of exaltation. But the final segment of the Psalms leaves one clear impression on the reader: God is worthy to be praised! Praise Him from one generation to the next; praise Him for His help in time of trouble; praise Him as Creator and Sustainer, Savior and Lord.

**YOUR DAILY WALK** Psalms 146-150 all begin and end with the same Hebrew word: *hallelujah*, which means "praise the Lord!" It's the psalmist's way of saying, "Shout from the rooftops the praiseworthy character of the Lord and His mighty deeds on behalf of His people!" Psalm 146 alone catalogs a dozen things for which God should be exalted, including His creation, truth, judgment, provision, healing, protection, and rule. Every part of creation—from the sun to the sea creatures, from snowflakes to stars—shouts forth the news of a great God in heaven (Psalm 148).

Psalm 150 provides the capstone of the section, and indeed the Book of Psalms as a whole. In just six short verses the psalmist issues the command to "praise" a total of 11 times! The point of the psalm is clear: With every breath you take, let your life be an anthem of praise to God, for He is worthy of your public proclamation of His greatness.

You are surrounded by people who need to hear about the praiseworthy character of your God. Construct your own list of 10 friends, relatives, neighbors, and associates who need to hear and respond to God's love. Begin to pray for each person, each day, by name. And pray for yourself, that when God opens the door of opportunity, you'll be ready.

*Praising and adoring God is the noblest part of the saint's work on earth, as it will be his chief employ in heaven.*

**INSIGHT** An Acrostic to Teach You How to Praise

Simply put, praise is: Publicly Recounting the Acts of the Incomparable Sovereign of Eternity. A handy acrostic to remember!

## WOULD YOU HAVE Done It?

**H**ad you been one of the exiled Jews, would you have left a life of relative comfort in Babylon and endured a 900 mile trek home, knowing that you would arrive to face a tremendous task: to completely rebuild the destroyed land that was once your home?

Indeed, many Jews didn't do it. Of the two to three million exiled, only fifty thousand made the choice to return to Judah. And you know what happened next: They rebuilt the temple and the city walls and made sweeping religious and political reforms to emerge as a reconstructed kingdom. The sacrifice proved worthwhile as God magnificently made good on His promises to restore His people.

An even more worthwhile decision is the choice of Christ as your personal Savior. Perhaps, like the Jews, you live in complacent comfort,

held captive by a godless throne. That life is easy—you take no risks, make no tough choices—but you also deny yourself the joy of abundant life, now and forever.

Or, you can choose Jesus Christ.

Like the Jews' journey home, the road is not always easy, but the destination is wonderful. When you choose Christ as your Savior, God will destroy your old nature, then rebuild your walls and restore you as a brand new creature, fresh and strong and ready to live for Christ.

If you're in the Babylon of sin and estrangement from God, it's time to make a choice. Won't you return home?

*For further help, call  
1-888-NeedHim.*