

Psalms - Today in the Word

Psalms Resources

[Psalms - Collection of Commentaries Part 1](#)

[Psalms - Collection of Commentaries Part 2](#)

[Psalms - Our Daily Bread - Over 400 devotional illustrations by Scripture](#)

[Psalms - Sermons and Devotionals by C H Spurgeon Indexed by Scripture](#)

[Psalms - Part 1 - Devotionals from Morning and Evening Indexed by Psalm](#)

[Psalms - Part 2 - Devotionals from Morning and Evening Indexed by Psalm](#)

[Psalms 1-31 - Devotional Illustrations - Today in the Word](#)

[Psalms 32-100 - Devotional Illustrations - Today in the Word](#)

[Psalms 102-150 - Devotional Illustrations - Today in the Word](#)

[Devotionals & Illustrations — on Psalms 1-31 from — TODAY IN THE WORD](#)

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[Psalms 32-100](#)

[Psalms 102-150](#)

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[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 1

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. - Psalm 119:11

According to Parade magazine, Marilyn vos Savant is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records Hall of Fame for having the “highest I.Q.” If that honor were bestowed in around A.D. 400, it would have been given to Jerome. This early church leader was born in 331, in what was then northeast Italy, to a wealthy family. Early on, he was sent to Rome to study grammar and philosophy. Jerome passionately loved Greek and Roman classics. In fact, Jerome loved this literature so much, especially the works of the Roman statesman Cicero, that he later wrote about a dream that he had in which the Lord said to him, “You are a follower of Cicero, not of Christ.”

Because of this dream, Jerome set aside the study of classics, and devoted himself to studying God’s Word. He once wrote, “Make knowledge of Scripture your life.” In this regard, he was like the psalmist who wrote, “His delight is in the law of the Lord” (Ps. 1:2). Like the psalmist, Jerome meditated on God’s Word day and night. And the Lord watched over him in a remarkable way (v. 6).

Do you know the stories behind the names Ignatius, Origen, and Jerome? With all the pressures of daily living, it’s hard to find time to read about the exciting lives of the early followers of Jesus. Yet reading about the faith and devotion of these believers is very encouraging. If you don’t already have a good one-volume book on church history, this month might be a good time to obtain one. One such volume is Great Leaders of the Christian Church, published by Moody Press and available at Christian bookstores.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 1

He is like a tree planted by streams of water. - Psalm 1:3

The apostle Paul knew the benefits of good company, as well as the dangers of bad. He witnessed both firsthand in Corinth. The Corinthian believers' faith was being harmed from spending extensive time with people who denied the resurrection. Quoting the Greek poet Menander, he exhorted the Corinthians to be careful of their associations. "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" (1 Cor. 15:33).

On the other hand, Psalm 1 paints a vivid picture of the kind of company a righteous person chooses and the good results that follow. This contrast between righteous and wicked company recalls the choice between the two trees we looked at earlier. In fact, we can read this psalm as a picture of someone who chooses the Tree of Life instead of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This is the first of five images we will examine that symbolize the righteous person.

The psalm begins by describing the company that the righteous person, the person called "blessed," does not choose. The verbs the psalmist uses show the progression of those who start down the "way of sinners": first they "walk," then "stand," then "sit" (v. 1). What begins as a casual visit ends as a permanent residence.

But how then does the righteous person spend his time? In delight and meditation on "the law of the Lord" (v. 2). He feeds on God's counsel. Together with the psalmist, this person exclaims, "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long" (Ps. 119:97). God's Word is his good company, night and day. He takes it in to his inmost being by frequent contemplation.

In *The Company We Keep*, Wayne Booth argues that what we read influences our habits of moral reasoning, perhaps even our behavior.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 1:1-6

The LORD watches over the way of the righteous. - Psalm 1:6

Legendary baseball manager John McGraw led the New York Giants from 1902 to 1932, running his team with unquestioned authority. Once, McGraw's wife wanted to talk to Fred Merkle, one of the Giants players. She gestured to Merkle several times, but wasn't able to catch his attention. After the game, Mrs. McGraw said to Merkle in mild exasperation, 'Freddie, didn't you see me waving to you during the game?'

Merkle was startled. 'Good grief, Mrs. Mac. Are you giving signals now too?'

The story is funny, but Merkle had the right idea. He knew the only way to flourish in a Giants uniform was to pay attention to his leader. The same is true for us. If we want to flourish spiritually, we need to pay attention to the directions our Leader has given.

For us that means paying close attention to the Word of God, making it our daily delight and the subject of our study and meditation. Jesus called it abiding in Him and allowing His Word to abide in us. His promise is that when we do this, we will be spiritually fruitful (John 15:7-8).

The psalmist has basically the same message, comparing a person of the Word with a fruitful tree planted in a good location. It's a great picture of the freshness and new life we associate with springtime.

The good news is that this does not have to be just a seasonal, or temporary, way of life for God's people. The writer says the person whose heart is set on God flourishes in every season, and 'whatever he does prospers' (v. 3).

What about the world and its pull on us? Sin can choke out our spiritual growth anytime, but the psalmist is careful to warn us against falling under the influence of people who have no regard for God. It's a progressively downward spiral, which ends with us sitting, or having fellowship, among the ungodly. Bad company can throw a cold winter blanket over our spiritual lives.

But there's no comparison between the blessing God offers and the dead-end pursuits of the world. If you want to enjoy a springlike walk with Christ, keep your eyes on Him.

Psalm 1:1 reminds us that we need to maintain balance in our relationships with unbelievers.

The Bible does not forbid association with unbelievers. We need to know lost people so we can love them and win them to Christ. The problem comes when those who don't know Christ are able to lead us away from Him. Today review your friendships with unbelievers. In which direction is the influence going? It's worth thinking about.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 2:1-12

I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. - Psalm 2:6

Last November, a prairie fire driven by 76-mile-an-hour winds swept through the tiny town of Overlook, Montana. One man said the fire, which consumed everything in its path, went through the town in a matter of minutes. Another man witnessed a wall of flame that traveled a quarter-mile in seconds.

The picture of an unstoppable fire moving with irresistible power helps us understand the picture of Messiah's reign drawn by David (Acts 4:25 identifies David as the author of this psalm). Psalm 2 is called a royal psalm that was used at the coronation of the kings who were in David's line. But this prophecy will find its ultimate fulfillment in the coming reign of God's "Anointed One" (v. 2)--literally, His "Messiah."

This psalm leaves no doubt about the absolute nature of Christ's rule when He returns to take His throne as King and rule in His kingdom. According to Revelation 19:17-21, Jesus Christ will find His enemies assembled against Him when He rides out of heaven as the conquering King. But He will sweep these armies away as quickly and completely as a fire raging across the prairie.

In light of Messiah's position as God's Son and chosen Ruler, the psalmist expressed amazement that rebellious nations would even attempt to resist Him. Messiah's kingdom will not be a democracy. He will rule "with an iron scepter" (v. 9) that smashes His foes like pieces of pottery.

In our climate of political correctness, some people might think that Psalm 2 is too militaristic and aggressive in its portrayal of the Messiah's kingdom. But David had a revelation from God about things to come. He knew the certainty of God's judgment, and warned his readers to come to God in humility and repentance, seeking God's favor while there was still time.

The language of verse 11 is the language of worship, showing that the only wise response to Messiah's irresistible power and authority is to bow before Him in submission. Failure to do so means being consumed by the fire of His judgment. But those who willingly bow their knees to the King of Kings in submission find Him to be a refuge, a place of blessing and protection.

Paul says that one day, every person will bow before Jesus Christ and confess that He is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11).

Today we have the opportunity to approach God in repentance and faith. Have you put your faith in Christ for your salvation? If you will admit your sinfulness, realize you cannot save yourself, and trust the work of Christ on the cross as payment for your sin, you will be saved. If you trust in Christ, share your exciting news with someone.

A few years ago, when archaeologists began excavating in the courtyard of a medieval monastery, they found seeds that had been dormant for more than 400 years that had begun to grow. King Henry VIII had closed the monastery in 1539, and the herbs tended by the monks died. But they sprouted to life again after the archaeologists disturbed the earth. The world views God's kingdom much like those medieval seeds: dormant, forgotten, and buried like a long-lost memory. But when the time comes for the kingdoms of this world to be delivered over to Jesus Christ, His millennial kingdom will suddenly burst onto the world scene. Then everyone will know that Jesus is the true King, worthy of universal worship and praise. Psalm 2 is called a royal psalm, and for good reason. In it we see the coronation and exaltation of God's "Anointed One" or the Messiah, Jesus Christ. To those of us who know Him, this psalm is an encouraging reminder of Jesus' ultimate triumph and a joyous call to bow down and worship our Lord and King. But for "the nations," the unbelieving world, Psalm 2 is a sober warning of the futility of trying to resist Christ's rule. Not only is Jesus the only Name under heaven by which people can be saved (Acts 4:12). He is also the only Ruler worthy to claim the allegiance of every person on earth. The picture of God's breaking the rebellion of the nations and giving them to His Son to rule reminds us that the Lord we worship is also the Warrior who will defeat His enemies (Rev. 19:11-21). And the Savior we adore is also the Judge, who will shatter the opposition of those foolish enough to rebel against Him (Isa. 11:4). Because this is true, the earth's peoples are given wise advice in Psalm 2:10-12. A kiss in this context is a sign of homage. Those who choose to bow down and worship Jesus Christ, taking refuge in Him, will be safe.

Is there anyone in your family or circle of acquaintances who does not know Jesus Christ as Savior? Since this is almost certainly the case, we suggest making this weekend a time of focused prayer for a friend or a relative who does not know the truth. Ask God to lay someone close to you on your heart today, and begin to pray for that person's salvation. Or if you already have a loved one on your prayer list, bring that person before the King's throne in concentrated prayer.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 2:10-12; Judges 2:1-15.

Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, once complained to the President about a fellow army officer. Lincoln advised him to write the man a letter expressing his anger. Stanton did so, and showed it to Lincoln.

After approving the letter, the President asked Stanton what he planned to do with it. "Send it," he answered in surprise.

But Lincoln told him to burn the letter. "That's what I do when I have written a letter while I am angry. It's a good letter. You had a good time writing it and you feel better. Now burn it and write another."

When it comes to human anger, it's almost always a good idea to think twice, count to ten, take a walk, or do whatever it takes to reconsider your response. But God never needs to reconsider or repent for His anger. Because God is holy and perfect, His anger is holy and perfect.

Judges 2 gives us a clear picture of God's anger in action as He deals with the disobedience and sin of Israel. The time of the judges was a low point in Israel's history, as God's people provoked Him to anger by their sin.

We can be grateful that God is "slow to anger" and ready to forgive. But once His anger is kindled, it burns with a purifying and judging fire (see Judges 3:8). David said that God "expresses His wrath every day" (Ps. 7:11) against sin and disobedience. No wonder the psalmist counseled the nations to "kiss the Son" (Ps. 2:12). That is, we are to give homage to Messiah, the Lord's anointed Ruler.

Divine wrath is real, but it is never petty, vengeful, haphazard, or cruel--traits which so often characterize our expressions of anger. Jesus displayed the righteous anger of God on several occasions, but not to avenge a personal wrong or to justify Himself.

Isn't it embarrassing when you are angry about someone else's transgression, then turn around and do the same thing yourself?

It is hard to stay angry at the other person in such a situation. The fact is we need to be forgiven, and we need to forgive (Matt. 6:14-15). Think about what this means in terms of our relationship with God. His anger towards us is always justified. If He were to hold us accountable for all of our transgressions, none of us would be saved. But on the cross Jesus Christ absorbed the blows of God's anger against our sin.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 3

To the Lord I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill. - Psalm 3:4

During His ministry on earth, Jesus put a great deal of time into training twelve special disciples. He taught them, told them parables, prayed for them, and answered their many questions. He had called them from many different walks of life to follow Him as friends. Imagine, then, how much it must have hurt Him to know that one of them would betray Him; what pain must have filled His final words to Judas: "Friend, do what you came for." He was betrayed not by an enemy or a hostile religious leader, but by someone into whom He'd poured His best efforts (Matt. 26:14–25, 47–50).

That's the way David felt in today's psalm. His son, Absalom, had betrayed him and led a rebellion against his throne (see 2 Sam. 15–19)—David had bottomed out personally (as father), professionally (as king), and spiritually. At this lowest of low points, he fled to God in prayer.

The situation seemed hopeless. Enemies surrounded him and it appeared God had deserted him. Nonetheless, David's faith remained strong. Even the lament of the opening verses is framed within the prayer, "O Lord." Why? Because God was greater than the terrible situation David was in, even greater than the betrayal of his own son. He trusted that God would be his protection and seized on the picture of the Lord as a shield, an image also found in Moses' final blessing on the Israelites (Deut. 33:29). David declared his confidence that God would not only save him but give him the victory (v. 3). He was sure enough of God's answer that he could sleep peacefully under the Lord's protection, and sure enough to keep courage when foes were drawn up on every side.

The psalm closes with an emotional climax. David prayed that God would arise, sustain and rescue him, and strike down the wicked. He understood God's character and demonstrated complete faith that He would deliver His anointed king.

Yesterday we mentioned that you might want to start a prayer journal as a possible goal this month. What do you write in such a journal? Here are a few suggestions: Keep a list of prayer requests and answers. Copy down powerful phrases from biblical or other published prayers. Jot down new prayer habits, goals, and ideas. Try to compose your own psalm or write out a prayer for a public occasion, such as Election Day. Write a diary entry on your perceptions and feelings about your current prayer life.

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Psalm 4

Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress. - Psalm 4:1

Three-year-old Gabby Gingras suffers from a nerve disorder called hereditary sensory autonomic neuropathy Type 5. It's so rare that only about 25 people in the entire United States are thought to have it. In this disorder, pain sensations are blocked from reaching the brain. Gabby might break a tooth or skin a knee, but she would feel nothing. As a result, she doesn't know when she's injured herself, and her parents must keep a watchful eye on her at all times. The pain that would warn another child doesn't exist for her.

Gabby's condition shows us that pain has a purpose in the natural world. The same is true in the spiritual world—God can use difficulties to teach and transform us. But it's still not easy or pleasant, and so we cry out for comfort as David did: "Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer" (v. 1). When we pray, there's no need to tiptoe around our real thoughts and feelings—we can urgently and directly call on God. Such boldness is a sign of faith. It shows we believe He's the kind of God who wants and is able to respond to our prayers, just as David believed God was righteous and merciful and would come to his aid. "Give me relief" literally means "make a spacious place for me," a picture of freedom and security.

Whatever the exact situation was that prompted David to write Psalm 4, the crisis clearly had a public dimension. Some people had turned to false idols and other delusions, which for their king meant his God-given glory was turned to shame (v. 2). They had made a huge mistake, though, for God keeps the promises He's made to the people He's chosen; therefore, He will surely answer the prayers of the godly. Godly people are ready to search their hearts and repent (v. 4), trust steadfastly, and worship rightly.

As we continue reading different psalms, you'll notice that the psalmist's body language is an important part of his prayer life. We might be used to kneeling or folding our hands. Such body language is meant to indicate humility, submission, and worship, though it sometimes becomes merely an unthinking habit.

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Psalm 5

Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. - Psalm 5:11

In 1932, musician Thomas A. Dorsey experienced a shock. While singing in a revival meeting, he received a telegram saying his wife had just died in childbirth. A few days later, anguished and depressed, he sat down at a piano. As he toyed with the keys, a song emerged: "Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand. I am tired, I am weak, I am worn. Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light. Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home." Today, Dorsey is considered the father of gospel music and "Precious Lord" is considered one of the greatest gospel songs ever.

Like "Precious Lord," Psalm 5 is a prayer for help and refuge in times of trouble. As he had done in earlier psalms, David began by describing his situation. He felt discouraged and was waiting in faith for God to act (vv. 1–3). In his prayer, he described not only his own state but the "state of God" as well: God loves righteous and humble people, but abhors and judges the proud, dishonest, and violent (vv. 4–6).

Because of God's character, David had a valid basis for confidence that God was on his side (vv. 7–12). He was humble and worshipful. He honored God's lovingkindness, sought His presence, pursued righteousness with His help, and tried to live blamelessly before his enemies. They, on the other hand, were untrustworthy, destructive, deceitful, and malicious. In a striking metaphor, their throats are compared to open graves (v. 9). They were on the side of death, not life. David loved God's justice so much that he boldly called on Him to judge and punish such people. In the meantime, he would remain safe and glad, enjoying God's favor and praising His blessings (cf. Ps. 30:5).

One resource that can help you grow in your prayer life is the book *A Journey to Victorious Praying: Finding Discipline and Delight in Your Prayer Life*, by Bill Thrasher (Moody Publishers, 2003). Dr. Thrasher is a professor of Bible and theology at Moody Graduate School in Chicago, where he has taught a course on prayer for many years. Chapter titles include "Transforming Fear Into Faith," "Realizing the Struggle of Prayer," "Experiencing the Joy of Waiting," and "Cultivating a Lifestyle of Worship."

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Psalm 8

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! - Psalm 8:9

William F. M. Buscombe had a passion for the stars. After his doctoral studies, he worked in Australia and was a pioneer in studying and classifying stars in the southern hemisphere. Later he taught at Northwestern University near Chicago. Since this is a difficult place to do astronomy, he compiled data from other researchers. The star catalog he published, *MK Spectral Classifications*, is considered a standard reference work in the field. He was working on the sixteenth edition when he died early last year.

As a young man, Buscombe left his agnosticism to become a practicing Quaker, or Friend, a faith he retained throughout his life. He studied the stars, and he studied their Creator. So can we! Today's psalm is a familiar one, perhaps so familiar you didn't realize it's a prayer addressed directly to the Lord. This prayer exalts God's "majesty," a term that can also be translated "noble," "magnificent," or "glorious." David perceived God's majesty in His creation, especially humanity, creation's crown jewel (vv. 3–5; cf. Heb. 2:6–8). Recognizing God's power and artistry displayed in the natural world, he marveled that He used His own "fingers" to set the stars in place.

Even more astounding than the galaxies of stars is what God has done with and for humanity. He has been "mindful" of us, that is, remembered us in the sense of loving and caring for us. He created us, "crowned" us by making us in His image, and appointed us as rulers or stewards over the rest of the created world (cf. Gen. 1:28–30). As amazed as he is by the splendor of nature, David was even more amazed by the relational love God has shown and proved towards us. Even children must be able to see and respond to such an obvious truth, a fact that heaps coals on the heads of those who oppose God (v. 2; cf. Matt. 21:16; Rom. 1:19–20).

Step outdoors for your prayer time today, and revel in the glory of God as seen in creation. If you're in an urban area, this application may take extra effort, but perhaps you can find a park or other natural setting.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 8:1-9

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! -

Researchers Wolfgang Kirchner and Axel Michelson performed a number of experiments to test a theory.

The way in which explorer bees “dance” to tell other bees where to find flowers, sugar, or other food has long been studied by scientists. The bees’ dance conveys information--one part directs other bees where to go, another part tells them how far. But how is this accomplished?

Kirchner and Michelson believed the answer lay in noises pitched lower than the buzzing we hear. The bees could sense this, via their antennae, even in the dark. To test their theory, the two built a tiny robot bee which imitated an explorer bee’s informational dance in every detail.

The robot bee worked perfectly. When it danced, the real bees “listened” and went straight to a pan of sugar water in a field. A bit more of the bees’ intricate “language” had been eventually unlocked!

The intricate design of the created world should inspire not only our study, but also our worship, as it does for David in today’s psalm.

Psalm 8 opens and closes with identical affirmations of the majesty of God’s name. What is His name? As He told Moses, “I Am” (Ex. 3:14)--the eternal, self-existent, one and only God.

His glory is the highest truth in the universe (v. 1b). This is why praise of God in the mouths of children is enough to silence His enemies (v. 2)--a verse partially quoted by Jesus after the Triumphal Entry (Matt 21:16).

David is moved to worship when he considers the night sky. “Consider” (v. 3) suggests that he observed attentively, reflected, meditated, and saw the moon and stars as pointing to their Maker.

He is then led to thoughts about the place and purpose of humanity (vv. 4-8). How is it that we matter to God? Why does He pay so much attention to us (cf. Job 7:17-18)? For what reasons does He love and honor us? Why did He appoint us to rule over the created world (cf. Gen. 1:28; Heb. 2:6-9)?

We suggest that you plan a time of worship for yourself, your family, or your small group which would be centered around creation.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 9

He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice. - Psalm 9:8

In *The Godhood of God*, A. W. Pink wrote, "To speak of the Godhood of God is to say that the Helm is in His hand, and that He is steering according to His own good pleasure. To speak of the Godhood of God is to say that He is the Potter, that we are the clay, and that out of the clay He shapes one as a vessel to honor and another as a vessel to dishonor according to His own sovereign rights ... To speak of the God-hood of God is to give the mighty Creator His rightful place; it is to recognize His exalted majesty; it is to [acknowledge] His universal scepter."

In today's reading, David praised God for His sovereignty over the nations, especially as seen in judgment on the wicked (which is unspecified but might have referred to an Israelite military victory). The language seems harsh--"rebuked," "destroyed," "blotted out their name," "endless ruin," "uprooted." Are we really allowed to pray like this? The psalmist does use hyperbolic language, but clearly these sentiments are acceptable because they are rooted in the truth that God hates sin and judges righteously.

This core truth is seen clearly in verses 7 through 10. God is the eternal king of the universe, the righteous judge, the just sovereign. But this does not make Him distant or uncaring--He is also a "refuge for the oppressed." His righteousness and justice, expressed through love, mean that He is a protector and champion for the needy. He is faithful and more than worthy of our trust.

The best response to God's sovereignty is to say and sing wholehearted praises, to "proclaim among the nations" the "wonders" of the One who rules us all with both authority and lovingkindness. And like David, we can pray that He will do more of the same--that is, pass judgment on the wicked and give them their just desserts. In their pride, they may "forget," neglect, and disrespect God, but the psalmist is sure He will act to put things in right perspective (v. 20).

Prayer that shows faith in God's sovereignty is as close as your daily newspaper. If you wish, pray with it open in front of you today. Was a child rescued from danger? Praise the Lord. Are you concerned about foreign policy? Ask for God's will to be done. Are unemployment rates climbing? Intercede for the needs of the poor. As you pray your way through the headlines, do not become anxious, but rather remember that God is in control and rest in that truth.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 10

Arise, Lord! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless. - Psalm 10:12 Psalm 10:12

The United Nations recently estimated that 25,000 people a day die of hunger around the world. Every year, six million children under the age of five suffer from hunger. There are about 840 million malnourished people globally, with 95 percent of them in developing nations. While the number of such people has decreased in Asia, it has actually increased in Africa. In addition, as many as two billion people are said to be undernourished--that is, they are technically getting enough to eat, but their diets lack key nutrients.

The hungry are often victims of war, corruption, or greed. When we hear about the poor and the powerless, we should be moved to prayer, as the psalmist was in today's reading. Many commentators think Psalms 9 and 10 were originally a single composition, and indeed a running thread through both is that a sovereign and just God upholds those who cannot stand on their own. Yesterday we focused on God's sovereignty, today we'll look more at how He cares for the victims of the world.

In this prayer, the oppressors are described as arrogant, powerful, wicked, self-confident, and self-centered. They hunt, trap, lie, threaten, ambush, plot against, and crush those who stand in their way or have something they want. Their attitude toward God is even worse. They pay no attention to Him or His laws, and when they do they slander His name, claiming that He either doesn't see or won't do anything (vv. 11, 13). Their sinful appetites are the center of their lives (v. 3; Phil. 3:18-19).

Although such observations might make it feel as though God is far away (v. 1), David prayed for Him to teach the oppressors a severe lesson and break their power. He believed that God does see and will hold the wicked accountable. After all, He is the "helper of the fatherless" (v. 14). He hears and encourages the afflicted and steps up to defend the victim--there's a special place for them in His heart (Isa. 61:1). Why? Justice must be done, and people must understand their finite place in the order of things (v. 18).

Let today's psalm inspire you to pen your own prayer for the powerless.

You might pray for a specific group--babies who are aborted, addicts trapped in their own desires, or people victimized by unjust social structures.

You might pray in general, calling on God to help anyone in need today. Or you might pray evangelistically, asking the Lord to save powerless individuals in bondage to sin. As you compose your prayer, be sure to include descriptions of God's love for such people.

Psalm 11:4-7

The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. - Psalm 11:4

Whoever first dreamed up the idea for those “court TV” shows is most likely a wealthy person by now. The popularity of these programs seems to be unlimited, and several of the TV judges have become genuine media celebrities. The judges’ colorful personalities are certainly one reason these court dramas are popular. Another reason has to be that people enjoy playing judge themselves as they listen to both sides of a case and debate how they would decide the case.

Daytime courtroom television may seem light-years away from the truth of Psalm 11. But there’s an important connection, which we can summarize in one word: justice. Human beings have a deep-seated thirst for justice, a characteristic that connects us to God who rules from heaven with perfect justice.

This month we’ve read several Scripture passages that talk about heaven as the location of God’s throne. And when God takes His seat on His heavenly throne, things happen. Angels fall down in worship because God is holy, and He dispenses justice as the supreme Judge of the universe.

Today’s verses are definitely about divine justice, but it’s important to see that David closely linked God’s holiness with His justice. These two divine attributes are joined because God’s holiness is the only reliable standard to measure right and wrong.

Sometimes people who are victims of injustice wonder out loud if anybody’s watching “up there.” The unfairness of life in a sinful world can even lead God’s people to doubt His goodness.

But Scripture’s answer to these doubts is that nothing escapes heaven’s attention. God is not only watching the events of earth; He is closely examining every motive and action and executing judgment based on His righteous character. Jeremiah said, God “probe[s] the heart and mind” (Jer. 20:12).

Since we are not perfect, sometimes the line between a desire for justice and revenge can get blurred.

Psalm 11:4-7

King James I of England, the monarch whose name is linked to the King James Version of the Bible, once tried his hand at being a judge. But after hearing both sides in one case, James was so perplexed that he gave up his “career” in despair. “I could get on very well hearing one side only,” he said. “But when both sides have been heard, by my soul, I know not which is right.”

King James is not alone in his perplexity. We often don’t know who’s right and who’s wrong, or which side in a dispute is telling the truth. Just ask any parent quizzing two children who take turns insisting, “Did too!”... “Did not!”

There are two very good reasons that human judgment is often faulty. We are not absolutely holy or just, and we lack perfect knowledge in any situation. But heaven’s Judge possesses both of these qualifications. From His heavenly throne, God “observes the sons of men” (v. 4). He examines hearts and discerns motives and judges accordingly.

According to verse 5, God examines the righteous. Since He is righteous and loves justice, those who are upright before Him will see His face (v. 7).

But because nothing escapes the sight of heaven’s Judge, the wicked will not escape His justice (vv. 5-6). As we will see later this month, the psalmist’s use of “burning sulfur” to describe God’s judgment on the wicked is suggestive of the punishment of hell.

Psalm 11 presents a stark contrast to the idea that God sits impassively in the heavens, watching but not getting involved with the events of earth. This psalm also opposes the false idea of ancient cultures that the gods shared all the vices and idiosyncrasies of human beings.

Although we are imperfect, God has given us His revelation, the Bible, to guide us in living lives of righteousness that please Him.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 12

Help, Lord, for the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men. - Psalm 12:1 Psalm 12:1

The summer of 2003 set a record for tornadoes. In the first ten days of May, over 400 tornadoes were reported in the midwestern and southern United States. President Bush issued disaster declarations for Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kansas, and Missouri. In Oklahoma alone, more than 130 people were injured, more than 300 homes and businesses were destroyed, and storm-caused damage hit \$100 million.

"We just don't have a down day," said a meteorologist at the time. "It just doesn't seem to stop." That's what David must have felt like in Psalm 12. All around him, evil seemed to be winning the day. It appeared as though the godly had vanished from society. That wasn't literally true, of course, but it reflects the psalmist's very human fear and depression at that moment. "Help, Lord," sounds like a feeble cry under the circumstances! But David was looking in the right direction (v. 1).

His prayer is refreshingly straightforward. He told God what he saw and asked Him to do something about it. He saw people lying, flattering, and boasting, and prayed for God to cut off their tongues. He saw people living for themselves first, and prayed for God's perfect Word to be revealed. He saw people oppressing the weak, and prayed for Him to watch over the needy. David fully trusted God to answer these prayers. After all, His Word is enduring and pure, like silver repeatedly refined in a furnace (Isa. 40:8). And yet ... it did seem that the wicked were running the show, and on that note the prayer ends (v. 8). David honestly portrayed the situation at that time--all was not well with the world. But his faith was strong enough to look the facts full in the face and still believe God would act.

How might we pray when it seems evil is prevailing? Like David, we can be honest and straightforward in describing how sinful people act in sinful ways. Like David, we should put our confidence in the flawless Word of God. And like David, we must trust absolutely in the Lord as our protector and bodyguard (v. 7).

Today might be a good point at which to reflect on what you've learned in this first week of Prayer: A Life of Wisdom. Have you noticed any differences between David's prayers and your own? Has the Spirit convicted you about anything specific? Do you feel burdened in any area? Are there topics about which you'd like to find out more?

Take time to reflect on what we are reading, as the Holy Spirit often uses these times of prayerful thoughtfulness to guide and encourage us.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 13

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? - Psalm 13:2

A little more than a year ago, Jane Barbe of Georgia died of complications from cancer. For the previous forty years, she had recorded messages for telephone companies nationwide. We've probably all heard her say, "We're sorry, your call cannot be completed as dialed" or "The number you reached has been changed. The new number is ..." Her voice was heard by 22 million people a day!

Hearing Barbe's voice meant that you would have to wait or try again to make your call. Sometimes it can feel that way with God. Does He plan to keep us "on hold" forever? The forceful "How long?" that opens Psalm 13 even sounds mildly accusatory. Does He know what He's doing? Does He have a plan? Has He forgotten us? "Forget" is an even stronger word in Hebrew than it sounds in English, suggesting neglect and lack of care (v. 1).

In his prayer, David described his feelings of abandonment through poetic repetition, hyperbole, strong word choices, and evocative imagery. He felt forgotten. He couldn't sense God's presence. He wrestled internally with loneliness, doubt, and sorrow, and externally his enemies seemed to be triumphing. Some commentators believe the king was suffering from a serious illness because of the "sleep in death" reference (v. 3), but it's more likely that David spoke hyperbolically, exaggerated for effect in order to show his desperate state of mind.

These are strong feelings, but faith is always more than feeling. David's prayer continued by calling on the Lord to "Look on me and answer." Despite God's apparent silence and inaction, he still believed in God as "my God" (v. 3) and he still desired God's presence most of all. That's why his first request was "Look on me"--the opposite of God hiding His face. He closed his prayer on a strong note of faith and joy--for him, the bottom line was God's unfailing love, and so he could say God "has been good to me" or "dealt bountifully with me" (nasb) as if it had already happened.

By now we see clearly how psalms can be a rich resource for our personal prayer lives. Prayers from church history can also inspire us as we see the faith and insight of those who have run the race before us. A book of such prayers can be an encouraging resource, for instance, *Classic Christian Prayers*, edited by Owen Collins (Random House, 2003). This inexpensive volume can be ordered through your local Christian bookstore or a Web site such as www.christianbook.com.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 15

Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? - Psalm 15:1

One of the classics in the devotional literature of church history is *The Practice of the Presence of God*, by Brother Lawrence, a seventeenth-century French monk. He learned to sense and enjoy God's presence no matter what he did, whether praying or washing dishes. He recounts his experience through the book's collection of letters and conversations. He once said, "I walk before God simply, in faith, with humility and with love; and I apply myself diligently to do nothing and think nothing which may displease Him. I hope that when I have done what I can, He will do with me what He pleases."

To dwell in God's presence was also David's purpose and joy. We saw yesterday how much God's presence meant to him, and today's psalm focuses entirely on seeking this blessing (cf. Ps. 24:3-6). The question of verse 1 defines the theme and is addressed to the Lord, and the answer that follows is a sort of descriptive prayer. The answer not only describes the person who dwells in God's presence, it is also a prayer to be or become such a person. When we seek to deepen our prayer lives and draw closer to God, as we're doing in this month's devotional study, we should pray to be made into this kind of person.

So, what kind of people can enjoy God's presence? What qualities does God love? The list is daunting. They must be blameless, upright, righteous, and truth-loving. They must love those who love God and keep their promises no matter what the cost. They need to control their tongues, avoiding lies, slander, and gossip. They should be generous, just, and compassionate, certainly not selfish people who flout God's commands or trample on the poor. They should hate sin as God does (v. 4).

David desired above all else to enjoy God's presence: "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple" (Ps. 27:4). Using today's psalm as a model, pray to become or to be made into this kind of person--one who wants intimacy with God above anything else life has to offer.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 16

I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. - Psalm 16:8

Early American theologian Jonathan Edwards wrote that believers should have “a real sense of the excellency of God, and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel. There is a divine and superlative glory in these things ... a glory greatly distinguishing them from all that is earthly and temporal. He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He [does not] merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing; but there is a sense of the loveliness of God’s holiness.”

In today’s reading, the psalmist has this sense of God. God was all the world to him: “Apart from you I have no good thing” (v. 2; cf. Ps. 73:25). This didn’t mean that David wasn’t thankful for his family, kingship, and other blessings. It simply meant that God Himself is incomparably greater than any of His gifts--that He was the all-sufficient, all-satisfying joy, truth, and purpose of David’s life. The king delighted to worship with other believers who thirsted after God in the same way (v. 3).

What had God done for David? He had given him wisdom and strength. In contrast to the “libations of blood” poured out by pagans to their idols, the true Lord had given the king a cup of blessings and a generous portion of His goodness. The pictures of land and food pictures communicate feelings of peace, prosperity, and safety, all grounded in a personal relationship with God. Only as a child of God would David have been able to speak of the “delightful inheritance” from and of his heavenly Father (v. 6). Part of that inheritance was eternal life (vv. 9–10; cf. Acts 2:25–33).

What is your favorite verse from this psalm? Study and meditate deeply on each word, each phrase, then say it to the Lord as your own heartfelt prayer. Don’t just recite the verse, but rather explore its meanings and implications, paraphrase it in modern terms, or pray it back in relation to your own circumstances.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 16

God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. - Psalm 73:26

In the musical *The Sound of Music*, based on the true story of the von Trapp Family Singers, a new governess Maria arrives to care for a widowed captain’s seven children. Although the captain professes to love his children, he often leaves for long periods, trying to cope with his own pain. Even when he is present physically, he substitutes governesses and gifts for emotional involvement with his children. His physical and emotional distance places an immense strain on the entire family.

Even the finest gifts in the world can’t satisfy what the human heart really wants--not things, but relationship. King David, who had unbelievable success and wealth, clearly understood this. At the beginning of today’s psalm, David exclaimed that if God were not a part of his life, he would have nothing good (Ps. 16:2). Trying to find life from any other source only leads to sorrow (v. 4).

Furthermore, David realized that ultimately God alone determined and gave what he needed. The “boundary lines” (v. 6) refer to the same process of allotting the promised land that we read about earlier in Numbers (see Nov. 11).

Here David used this imagery to describe the things that God had given him in life, both tangible and intangible. “Portion” (v. 5) often referred to one’s destiny, or “lot,” in life. Thus David was acknowledging that God has given him a good portion, or as we might say, a good life.

The cup (v. 5) was used by the priests and Levites in Temple worship. It’s perhaps mentioned here to link back to the concept of God as Levites’ inheritance (see Nov. 8); here David applied this truth on the individual level.

Sometimes it’s hard to grasp that God Himself is the most delightful inheritance possible.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 16:1-11

You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing. - Psalm 16:2

The New York Philharmonic is the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States. Founded in 1842, it was the first to play Dvorak's "New World" Symphony No. 9, and the first to broadcast a live concert on the radio. Scores of distinguished conductors, soloists, and instrumentalists have performed with the Philharmonic over the years, which now does about two hundred concerts annually. In more than a century and a half, it has performed nearly 14,000 concerts altogether.

Music is a wonderful gift, one which the psalmist David knew how best to use. It's no surprise to find David in this month's study—as with Moses, the only problem is which episode from his life to focus on. Rather than choose, we've read one of his psalms as a sample of the spirit of worship which permeated his life. We can see clearly here the faith and godly wisdom by which he lived.

How does God treat David in this psalm? As if at a banquet, He assigns him a pleasant portion. As if a divine surveyor, He draws the boundary lines in pleasant places (vv. 5-6). Delight, joy, and security characterize all that David receives from the Lord, who also counsels and instructs him. God is his teacher, and from Him he learns the "path of life."

How does David respond? He takes refuge in God, praising Him in the fellowship of faithful believers (v. 3). He sets the Lord always before him as the highest reality and priority of his life (v. 8). He rests in safety and waits eagerly for eternity (v. 11). Compared with the Lord, the rest of his life is nothing: "Apart from you I have no good thing" (v. 2; cf. Phil. 3:8).

In context, verse 10 expresses David's faith that God will sustain, preserve, and protect him, even beyond death. In the New Testament, this verse is applied to the Resurrection of Christ as well (see, for example, Acts 2:25-28).

Let your creativity flow today: Write a poem or praise song of your own. "Sing to the Lord a new song" (Ps. 98:1)! If you're better with words, try a poem—if you feel more comfortable at a keyboard or strumming a guitar, try a song. Your poem or song should exalt God and express faith in Him through the ups and downs of life.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 17

Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings. - Psalm 17:8

The room is quiet and dark, save for a small lamp on a stand by the door. A wooden crib stands against one wall, near a changing table. A few toys and books lie scattered on the floor. The mother sits quietly in a rocking chair, cradling her baby girl and singing softly. It's bedtime. The child snuggles closer and closes her eyes.

At that moment, all is well and right in that child's world. She is completely secure and at peace in her mother's arms. Our hearts should rest so securely in God's love—a key attitude of prayer we see in Psalm 17.

The early verses of this psalm are a faith-filled call for God to hear and answer. As we've seen elsewhere, David was confident in God's justice—He would vindicate him. David could have this confidence because he had been righteous in thought, word, and deed. He humbly invited God to test and examine him, so this was not a prideful claim. He was willing to submit to the perfect Judge. And he didn't claim to have achieved righteousness on his own, but freely admitted he had avoided the path of sin through following God's Word (vv. 3–5).

David prayed that God would show His love and power in order to demonstrate their special relationship to outsiders. His confidence flowed primarily from this personal relationship, described in various ways: God was his place of refuge. He was to God the "apple of your eye," that is, the pupil, especially valuable and worthy of protection. God was to him a mother bird, covering a chick with her wings (vv. 7–8).

How does it feel to rest securely in God's loving strength? Our illustration gave a picture of a mother holding her baby. David used images such as hiding in a strong tower, walking on a straight path, and a mother bird covering her chicks with her wings. What about you? What does it feel like to you personally? If you wish, make a metaphor or word picture to express your answer. This can be a creative way to express your love and trust in your heavenly Father.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 18

I call to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies. - Psalm 18:3

The legendary Civil War General “Stonewall” Jackson was once accidentally hit by “friendly fire” from his own Confederate soldiers. At a field hospital, they amputated his shattered left arm. General Robert E. Lee commented, “He has lost his left arm, but I have lost my right,” and the army buried the arm in a family plot near the hospital. Today, visitors can find there a plaque reading simply, “Arm of Stonewall Jackson, May 2, 1863.” The rest of General Jackson, of course, went on fighting until his death after the Battle of Chancellorsville.

As strong and famous as “Stonewall” Jackson’s left arm was, God’s “right hand” is even more powerful and glorious (v. 35). Today’s psalm is a prayer of praise to God the mighty warrior who rescued David and made him king (cf. 2 Sam. 22). Its main theme is the saving character of the Lord and how He exercises His power to protect and deliver those who love and follow Him (vv. 1–3).

The heart of the prayer is a narrative that symbolizes salvation, through David’s testimony of what God had done for him (vv. 4-19). He vividly pictured his situation as one of bondage, drowning, or similar miserable and life-threatening circumstances. In his distress, he prayed for help, then watched as the incredible Divine Warrior rushed to his aid and won the battle in awe-inspiring fashion. God snatched him from danger and set him in a “spacious place,” both secure and free.

God answered David’s prayer because He delights in His worshipers, so Psalm 18 goes on to explain what such people are like (vv. 20–29, see also Nov. 10). David also returned to the theme of God’s greatness and mighty perfection and described how He had empowered him to win even more victories. Though David claimed amazing strength and extraordinary speed, he wasn’t boasting in himself, but in the Lord: “You stoop down to make me great” (v. 35).

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, He has rescued you just as surely and powerfully as He rescued David in today’s psalm.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 19

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory. - Isaiah 6:3

Every so often, we are treated to glorious night skies. Recently, the Leonid meteor shower thrilled viewers with a steady stream of shooting stars. At such times, it really seems that “the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (v. 1).

We can praise the Lord for many things, but today’s psalm leads us to worship Him for two in particular: the natural world (creation) and His law (redemption).

As we read about the stars and the sun (vv. 1–6), we can almost envision David looking from the royal palace at the brilliant night sky or watching a huge yellow ball beginning to rise over Jerusalem. The noted Christian author C. S. Lewis thought that this was one of the greatest poems ever written, and it’s easy to agree. What wonderful images we find here! Skies speaking, star voices echoing forth, and the sun like a joyous bridegroom or a champion runner. Unlike the pagan religions around Israel, however, David doesn’t worship the sun or stars, but rather the One who created them.

David then moves to God’s law (vv. 7–11). Sometimes we think of the law as something somber and difficult, somehow the opposite of God’s grace. But the law isn’t about “dos” and “don’ts”—the law also reveals who God is. It tells us about the beautiful order that God has created and about His perfect righteousness and mercy. Once again, we can almost see David looking up from a rolled scroll and bursting forth in song for sheer joy.

In every aspect of the law he finds reason to worship. Precepts included instruction for daily living (v. 8), and ordinances concerned practical questions of everyday life (v. 9). Through it all David praises the Lord and proclaims that obedience leads to joy (v. 11).

The link between creation and God’s Word is fully revealed in Jesus Christ, the Word through whom everything was made (John 1:1–3). The hymn writer Isaac Watts wrote: “The heavens declare thy glory, Lord; In every star thy wisdom shines; But when our eyes behold thy word; We read thy name in fairer lines.”

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 19:1-11

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. - Psalm 19:1

One evening, some students and their professor sat by a small pond in the north woods of Michigan. It was the time of year for male peepers, tiny frogs only an inch or two long, to sing to draw the females: "PRRREEEP." As the sun set, more and more peepers began to sing.

The scene is recounted in the book *Redeeming Creation*: "We were surrounded, in the gathering dusk, by a moving sea of peepers, singing and struggling all around. There was just light enough to see them, crawling up a bracken fern to find a singing perch, filling their throats with air like tiny balloons about to burst, and then giving forth, at close range, an ear-splitting 'PRRREEEP'... When the concert ended and the peepers had gone away, we laughed together for the sheer joy and power of life, displayed for a moment in the grand efforts of one tiny creature to "be fruitful and increase in number" (Gen. 1:22).

The created world declares God's glory!

In verses 1-4 of our reading, David personified the skies as proclaiming God's glory, as if they were an announcer or a town crier (cf. Rom. 10:18). The idea of speaking is extended and exaggerated to make the point even stronger: They "pour forth speech," so much so that their "voice" is heard throughout the world. Creation is a kind of universal language, available to all people at all times.

The most prominent specific example of how the skies declare God's glory is the sun (vv. 5-6). The sky is a "tent" for it, while the sun itself is compared to a "bridegroom," suggesting eagerness and joy, and a "champion," pointing to strength and swiftness. These are not scientific observations but poetic ones, highlighting the power and beauty of this created object.

David spent most of the rest of the psalm praising God's Word (vv. 7-11). Why did he make this sudden jump? Is there any connection? Yes. In the Jewish mind, the change of topic was not a leap at all.

"The heavens declare the glory of God." What about you? Do you declare His glory? This is another way of asking, "Are you active in witnessing?" To witness is to testify to God's work in your life, to declare His love as shown in the good news of the gospel.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 19:7-14

Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. - Psalm 19:13a

How does God convict us of our sins? His Holy Spirit might speak directly to our hearts, bringing to mind a sinful attitude or action we need to confess. We might feel convicted of sin by reading Scripture or by taking in a Scripture-based sermon or book. A friend or family member might confront us about sin they've noticed in our life. Or by contrast with the words or actions of another person, we might see clearly that we ourselves have fallen short of God's standards. These are some of the means the Lord can use to reveal our sin to us and bring us to repentance.

In today's reading, David fell under conviction of sin. At first glance, we might wonder how the verses in this psalm connect--from creation to Scripture to confession of sin? Actually, these ideas link up quite naturally--from God's revelation in nature, to God's revelation of Scripture, to a sense of how we fall short of these revelations of God.

The Bible is perfect, flawless, truthful, and completely trustworthy. It shows us God's wisdom and moral law. In doing so, it gives us pleasure and joy. Its contents are of incalculable value and are a sure foundation on which to build our lives. These qualities of God's Word bring life to us.

Our proper response is worship. Given that Scripture is all that the psalmist says it is, the God who authored it must be worthy of our total submission and obedience. But who can make this perfect response? No one can, so it's no surprise that conviction of sin follows in the psalm.

David asked forgiveness for both known and unknown sins. In regard to the former, he asked to be shielded against temptation--that God's power would protect him from sins that would control his life. The latter was in keeping with Old Testament provisions for unintentional sin, and the fact that such sin has no excuse (vv. 12-13; cf. Ps. 90:8).

In Psalm 19, David asked forgiveness for "hidden faults." Many traditions confess "sins of omission" in addition to sins of attitude and action. What sins do you confess? Do you wait for something big or obvious before you fall on your knees? Do you not bother confessing "nitpicky" sins? Or do you confess to ask God to root out all that displeases Him? Examine your heart today. Ask God to

reveal to you both the intentional and unintentional sins you've committed against Him and be attuned to how He speaks to you by His Word, His Holy Spirit, and His people.

Psalm 19:7-11

The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold. - Psalm 119:72

Beginning in 2000, Americans will have a new one-dollar coin. But officials say the Sacagawea dollar honoring the Native American woman who guided the Lewis and Clark expedition will avoid the problems of the Susan B. Anthony dollar. The new coin will be the same size and weight as the Anthony, but it will have smooth edges so it can easily be distinguished by touch from quarters and other coins. It will also be set apart by its gold tone although officials have not yet decided what metals will be used to give the coin its color. Not gold itself, obviously! So even though people may look like they have a pocketful of gold next year, looks will be deceiving.

The writers of Scripture often compare God's Word to gold because it stands for something of the highest value. It takes a mature eye to look at 'all that glitters' and determine what is really valuable and what simply looks valuable. And it takes spiritual maturity to value the things of God above even the most sought-after wealth on earth.

We're talking about the season of faith called maturity, likening it to the mature period of a person's life when the lessons and experiences are put to work and result in productive output. One of the benefits of physical and emotional maturity is the ability to enjoy fully-formed, satisfying relationships.

In the same way, the spiritually mature Christian is able to enjoy deeply satisfying intimacy with God and experience the richness and sweetness of His Word. This was David's experience, and it can be ours today.

David talked about God's law in concrete terms, using words like commands, precepts, and ordinances that referred to specific provisions within the law of Moses. For our purposes, it's important to notice that whatever form the Word takes, it is profitable in our lives.

Gold was the most valuable commodity in David's time, and honey was the sweetest substance known. So David used both of these terms to describe the beauty and value of God's Word. Only a spiritually immature believer (the 'simple,' v. 7) would let go of the Word for the glitter of the world.

How much do you treasure the Word of God? Answer that question, and you'll have a pretty reliable indicator of your spiritual maturity.

Here are two 'measuring sticks' to help you. The suffering patriarch Job said he would choose the words of God's mouth over a good meal any day (Job 23:12). And Jesus said, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matt. 4:4). Can you identify with this kind of commitment?

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 20

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God - Psalm 20:7

In September 2002, recounts the syndicated News of the Weird column, a New York art student “painted randomly chosen words on about 60 meandering cows to see if they would inadvertently line up to form poetry. At about the same time, in England, [a writer] did the same thing with sheep (except that she chose the words of only one poem, to see if the sheep could form another poem). An arts council granted [her] about \$3,400 for her project, which she said would break down the boundaries between 'literature' and 'quantum mechanics.'”

These bizarre ideas of what constitutes a poem contrast with the beautiful linguistic artistry we've been seeing in the Psalms. It's especially apparent in Psalm 20, a public prayer for the king and his army as they headed into battle. Commentators aren't sure exactly who's speaking when, but the first five verses were probably spoken by the people (or the army) to the king, then the next three by a priest or Levite (or possibly the king himself), with the last verse essentially being the people's closing amen.

The people prayed for a series of requests. They asked God to answer the prayers of His anointed king, just as He promised to do. They asked Him to protect, send help, and grant support in the battle to come. They asked Him to remember and accept the sacrifices and worship offered to Him by His people--an acknowledgment of their covenant relationship. And they prayed that He would give David the desire of his heart and make his plans succeed. This “desire” was not merely for a battle to be won, but for the name of the Lord to be glorified and exalted among the nations.

A New Testament application of today's psalm may be found in 1 Timothy 2:1-2: “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority.” On this basis, we encourage you to pray today for our political leaders, including those at the local, state, and national levels. In light of Psalm 20, you might also remember the armed forces engaged in the ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 20:1-9

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. - Psalm 20:7

For years, a major U.S. electronics manufacturer advertised its products under the slogan, “The quality goes in before the name goes on.” The obvious intent of the ad campaign was to associate this company's name with the finest of quality in such a way that when people heard the name, they would automatically think “the best.”

Names and associations have power--and there is one name that commands all power in heaven and on earth. God puts high value on His name because it represents His character and reputation. To evoke the name of “the God of Jacob” is to call on His power and majesty. To trust in God's name is to trust in Him.

David, the king of Israel, was intimately acquainted with the power of God's name. So were the people of Israel. In this interesting Psalm, the people and the king had come together to call on God's name in prayer and to proclaim their trust in Him.

This is a royal Psalm, so-called because it is a prayer from the congregation of Israel, asking God's blessing and protection on the king as he was entering battle. Since David himself was doing the writing, he became the reporter of the people's prayer on his behalf (vv. 1-5). Then David reflected on his trust in God (vv. 6-8), and the people's petition was repeated (v. 9).

Psalm 20 reinforces an important lesson about prayer. When we pray, we call on the name of our God because He has invested His name with His power. And Jesus tells us to approach the Father in His name (John 14:12-14, see the May 18 study).

In other words, the formula “In Jesus' name. Amen” is not simply a verbal device to signal the end of our prayers. It is a plea for His attention to the prayer, an acknowledgment of our dependence on Him to answer, and a declaration of our trust in Him.

What a comfort to know that God's name will never fall, even when armies are brought to their knees (Psalm 20:8)! Others may call on their own strength or resources to save them, but we have the greatest weapon of all in prayer to our never-failing God.

This Psalm also reminds us that the power of prayer is often multiplied when God's people approach Him together.

You may be part of a praying congregation, and we hope you are. But we also urge you to find a prayer partner or two with whom you can share needs and praises throughout the week. Your church is a natural place in which to seek out a special prayer friend. If you don't have one, ask God to lead you to someone--or to bring someone to you.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 21:1-7

Be exalted, O Lord, in your strength; we will sing and praise your might. - Psalm 21:13

The popular 1950's television program 'Queen for a Day' took ordinary women with serious needs and made them feel like royalty for twenty-four hours. The winning contestant had her requests granted, a crown placed on her head, and a bouquet of flowers put in her hands. She even got to sit on a throne and be addressed as 'Your majesty.'

We're going to enjoy a little bit of royalty today as we join King David in a hymn of thanksgiving and praise to God. This is called a royal psalm, for obvious reasons. David wrote it as the king of Israel, acknowledging that God had given him his throne and established his kingdom.

We want to consider these verses as an example of what it's like when we are enjoying a spring season in our walk with Christ. See if this list of benefits describes those times in your life when you have been in extra-close fellowship with Him and you seem to be progressing 'from victory unto victory' spiritually.

David began by praising God for the strength He provides. Among other things, God's strength enabled David to defeat his enemies (vv. 1, 5). We need God's power for victory over our enemy the devil (1 Pet. 5:8). And with each spiritual victory comes the joy of realizing we don't have to be knocked around by sin and temptation.

The king also thanked God for answered prayer (Ps. 21:2). When our faith has a springlike freshness to it, it is usually evident in our prayer lives. This is not to say we can manipulate God to get what we want. David was writing as someone whose delight was in God, so that his prayers reflected God's desires (Ps. 37:4).

David also realized that his blessings did not end on this earth—they last forever (vv. 4, 6). Although the doctrine of eternal life was not fully developed in the Old Testament, David had written prophetically about the resurrection of Christ (Ps. 16:9-11). In our case, eternal life is a clear promise of God's Word.

The list keeps getting better. God's presence was the joy of David's life because he understood God's 'unfailing love' (v. 7). This is God's loyal love, a term you'll run into almost every time you go to the Psalms. His love never gets old, He will never leave you or forsake you (Heb. 13:5).

Most of the time we don't have any problem coming up with a prayer request list.

When was the last time you made a 'thank-you' list? Try it today. Recall the prayers God has answered recently, the needs He has provided for, spiritual victories you have enjoyed and last but not least, the faithful character of our Lord. Then begin thanking God for each item on your list, and your faith will grow stronger.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalms 22; Matthew 27:45-56

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me? - Psalm 22:1

Sometimes a poet captures an entire nation's heart. For many, Robert Frost expresses the American spirit. Others point to Walt Whitman as the quintessential American voice. For ancient Israel, King David gave voice to their praise, fears, and faith. In Psalm 22, David consoled himself in the face of profound terror by recalling God's past faithfulness. Even when he felt utterly forsaken, he took refuge in God's character.

Centuries later, this lament became a prayer on the lips of our dying Savior. Although David didn't know that he was writing prophetically, Psalm 22 perfectly articulated Jesus' experience on the Cross. Utterly forsaken and mocked, Jesus cried out with the haunting question, "Why?" Yet as Pastor Brian Morgan says, "In his darkest hour, Jesus follows the practice of his whole life: He prays to His Father."

Matthew tells us that three hours after Jesus was placed on the cross, He cried this lament in Aramaic (v. 46). A cry that came from the very core of His soul! This was the cry of One completely cut off from God ... cut off from all goodness, all mercy, all hope.

As we read this probing cry, we have to ask ourselves, "Why would God forsake Jesus? Why would the Father forsake His beloved Son?" We must ask ourselves this question, because it was for our sake that the Father did this. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." The Father's abandonment of His Son must have been wrenching.

Those standing nearby mistakenly thought that Jesus was crying out to Elijah, since first-century Jews believed that Elijah would precede the Messiah's coming. But more than mistaken, these bystanders were unwilling to really hear Jesus' question. They taunted Jesus to see if Elijah really would come (v. 49).

Sometimes Christians think it isn't spiritual to lament. But David realized his need to cry out to God, and so did our Lord Jesus

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 23:1-6

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. - Psalm 23:1

Commenting on Psalm 23, Bible teacher Charles Swindoll says sheep need three things before they can be at rest. First, they need to be within sight of the shepherd. If they can't see the shepherd, sheep will stand up looking until they collapse from exhaustion. Second, sheep need the safety of the flock. Even a sheep that is tired and hungry will not stop wandering if it is alone. Third, sheep need freedom from predators. As long as a wolf or a lion is near them, sheep will not lie down or eat.

What a picture of our need for Christ! It's obvious from this list of needs that we, as sheep, can't possibly take care of ourselves. Praise God for a faithful Shepherd who is always there to keep us safe.

The words and images of Psalm 23 have probably been reproduced, represented, and illustrated in more ways than any other passage of Scripture. But if we're not careful, these powerful verses that speak of real life can be sentimentalized until we begin to think that David is talking about a dreamy "neverland" where all is peace and light.

Dr. Swindoll's wise insights jar us from that mistaken notion. The landscape of Psalm 23 is not a dreamland, but the reality of a world that can be very hard on defenseless sheep.

The serenity of this psalm is undeniable. But its peace is enhanced, not diminished, when we realize that the Shepherd who provides cool water, green pasture, and safe passage for His sheep does so in spite of many threats.

There is the threat of becoming lost, for instance, which the shepherd deals with by His guiding hand that holds the rod and staff to keep sheep on the right path and lift a lost sheep from a crevice. There is also the danger of infection from injury, which the shepherd treats by anointing the sheep with healing oil.

For us, the "valley of the shadow of death" is the ultimate enemy (see 1 Cor. 15:26). But even in the day-to-day experiences of life, we are in the presence of our enemies. Yet God keeps us safe in the face of all these threats. Do you have a new appreciation for God's faithfulness to you today? Tell Him about it!

The opposite of rest and peace is worry and anxiety.

What are you worried about today? It's hard to be at peace when your heart and mind are being tossed around by fear and worry. It

usually doesn't help to tell someone, ""Quit worrying."" So we want to suggest the opposite! Go ahead and take five minutes today for some serious worrying. Lay out your fears; name your concerns. But after you have worried about them, take them to your Shepherd. Pray the promises of Psalm 23 back to Him--and see if your worries look as big.

[Another Devotional on Psalm 23](#)

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. - Psalm 19:14

O Lord Jesus Christ, who are the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we pray you not to let us stray from you, who are the Way, nor to distrust you, who are the Truth, nor to rest in any other thing than you, who are the Life. Teach us by your Holy Spirit what to believe, what to do ... Amen.--Erasmus

So far we have considered attitudes that help prayer, types of prayer, and the fruit of prayer. Today and tomorrow we will consider several models that help to integrate these ideas.

One such model that has been used for centuries is called *lectio divina*, which literally means "holy reading." Although the name may sound complicated, you have probably been doing the four parts of this model already!

During the first part, *lectio*, you read through a selected Scripture passage several times. The second part, *meditatio*, enables you to focus more intently, or meditate, on the passage, allowing it to "speak" to you.

In many monastic orders individuals were appointed to read the Scripture continuously throughout the day--most of us will only have twenty to thirty minutes. Fortunately, that is enough time to sample this method of reading over, meditating on, and praying through Scripture.

You can begin *lectio divina* with Psalm 23. First, read through the psalm for several minutes. Ask yourself: "What does this text say?" Next, spend at least five minutes meditating on this passage, asking yourself: "What does this text say to me?" For example, what does it feel like to walk alongside quiet waters? What is the "valley of the shadow of death" in your own life? How can the Lord's rod and staff comfort you? Allow your mind to engage in some sanctified imagination as you put yourself into this psalm.

At the end of this time, spend another five minutes in prayer, asking yourself: "What can I say back to the Lord from this text?" You may want to write out your responses. When you have finished this, spend several minutes quietly in the Lord's presence. Finally, consider any action this passage has prompted or any challenges you need to consider further.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 24:1-2.

Earlier this year an Austrian count returned to a secret location deep in the woods near his former home. There he unearthed two boxes containing his family's heirloom china and silver, treasures the nobleman had buried fifty years earlier as a teenager when his family was preparing to flee from the Nazis.

Before recovering the possessions, however, the count contacted the German government to validate his ownership claims. Once his claim was approved, the silver and china were sold at auction, since the count had no use for them anymore.

The count was wise to validate his claims. Things can change drastically in half a century, and the issue of who owns what can get complicated. Not so with God, however. His ownership of the earth and of "everything in it" (v. 1) is not subject to change. As someone once observed, He not only owns "the cattle on a thousand hills" (Ps. 50:10), but also the gold in the hills!

Today's text and verse suggest two important implications of this truth for us as God's children. First, everything we are and have belongs to Him. He has a two-fold claim on us. We are His by creation, and we are His by redemption (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Therefore, He also has first claim on our possessions.

A second implication is this: since "everything under heaven" is God's, no one can make a valid claim against Him (Job 41:11). That is, we have no grounds for questioning or complaining about the way God runs His universe.

That's important to remember because as we read yesterday's text (Deut. 8:17), we're tempted to think, "Hey, wait a minute. You're talking about my money. I worked hard for it, and nobody is going to tell me how to handle it."

Since God owns it all, then it's His prerogative to give what He wants to whom He wants.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 24:7-11

Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. - Psalm 24:7

The ancient Greeks knew how to heap glory on the winners of their Olympic events. The hero was crowned with the winner's wreath, his children were guaranteed a free education, and he was exempted from paying taxes the rest of his life. He also returned home in triumph by means of a curious ceremony. A hole was made in the wall surrounding the returning hero's home, and he entered through the hole. Then a bronze plaque was mounted in the hole as a permanent reminder of the athlete's victory.

This ancient ceremony helps to illustrate the event being described in Psalm 24, which some scholars believe is a prophecy of Christ's glorious entry into heaven following His ascension. But whether the scene of Psalm 24 is past or future, we do see another aspect of our future home today. Heaven is a place of amazing, incomparable glory.

All human events fall short of depicting this glory, although a royal coronation or ticker-tape parade are examples of ways to shower a special person with honor and glory. The language David uses to describe the entrance of this King into heaven reflects the way a victorious king would enter Jerusalem.

The doors would be thrown open, and the gate through which the king was to ride into the city would be "lifted up," or raised, to symbolize that the entrance wasn't high enough to accommodate the glory of this special person.

Like an earthly king who had been victorious in battle, the King of heaven triumphed over Satan, sin, and death in His resurrection and ascension. Christ is still the King of glory today, and in heaven we will be greeted by a scene more glorious than anything we could imagine. John's vision of the risen and exalted Christ in Revelation 5:6-14 gives us a taste of what it will be like when we see Jesus.

Glory is such an intrinsic quality of heaven that the word "glory" itself is often used as a synonym for heaven.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 24:7-10; Nehemiah 3:17-32

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. - Psalm 100:4

The head of the concierge service at a luxury hotel in Dallas was called to the room of a special guest one evening to fill an unusual request. The special guest was Britain's Prince Charles, who was in town to tour certain business facilities and to give a speech. The prince wanted to be more knowledgeable of Texas and its history before his visit and speech to the businessmen, and the head concierge happened to be an avid student of Texas history. So the two sat down together in the prince's hotel room, with the prince urging the man, "Call me Charles." They chatted for several hours as the concierge told his stories of Texas history and the two men shared talk of family and other things. Prince Charles even gave the man his personal card--this hotel employee had a quite a story to tell!

The gates of Jerusalem also had quite a story to tell, one of the royalty, glory, splendor, and victory that the city had witnessed in the years before the inglorious defeat and exile of God's sinful people. The second half of Nehemiah 3 is a pretty straightforward account of the rebuilding, important in itself but absent of spiritual detail. But Psalm 24 reminds us that the gates of Jerusalem were important for God's people beyond their function of providing protection and access to the city.

David may have written Psalm 24 when he brought the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6). Most Bible commentators agree that the greater fulfillment of Psalm 24 will be realized when Jesus, the King of glory, returns to establish His kingdom.

Yesterday we talked about looking back to a time when the Lord blessed you. Today, let's bring the focus back to the present. It's great to remember what God did for us, but we also need to experience His power at work in our lives today. With that in mind, here's a question to reflect on today:

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 25

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

Are you too busy to pray? Well, then, hire someone to do it for you! Believe it or not, prayers-for-hire is a growing business in the Philippines. If people want something—for example, to pass a bar or medical exam—they pay a “prayer lady” to ask God for it while they continue working or studying.

No doubt God is appalled when He hears these prayers-for-pay. One reason is because at the heart of true prayer is a personal relationship between God and His people. We’ve mentioned the relational aspect of prayer several times already this month, and we’ll give it special attention in today’s psalm.

David opened his prayer with a simple but profound statement about the relationship between himself (as the king) and God (as the King). God is the righteous protector of His people who would bring their enemies to shame. He is worthy of the wholehearted trust David placed in Him.

A series of petitions and praises made in the context of this relationship follow, many of which focus on David’s desire to know God better. He prayed that God would teach and guide him in the way of truth and obedience, the only way that he could have any genuine hope. He also prayed that God would “remember” him—meaning, as we’ve seen before, that God would remain loving and faithful to him. Only God’s mercy and love could cover and cleanse his sins. The psalmist was confident that God is the sort of God who can and will answer such requests. He affirmed that God instructs sinners and forgives wrongdoing. He loves people who are humble, repentant, and obedient, and who revere Him. Best of all, “The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.” In this relationship, God Himself has taken the initiative and shared His “secrets,” as friends do (v. 14; cf. John 15:14).

As we see in Psalm 25 and elsewhere, the idea of a personal relationship with God is a key facet of the life of prayer.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 25; James 1:5

Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior. - Psalm 25:4–5

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment and light riseth up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what thou wouldst have us to do, that the spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in thy light we may see light, and in thy straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.—The Book of Common Prayer

Sometimes discerning God’s will is not easy. The starting point, however, is to come to the Lord in prayer. And God promises to give wisdom (James 1:5).

Prayers for guidance often concern specific decisions. God’s Word must be at the core of such decisions, for we know that God will not lead us contrary to His own Word. The counsel and prayers of mature Christians who know us well are helpful. And because the Lord often reveals His will through circumstances, we should pray for increased awareness of the Holy Spirit’s leading.

In his book on prayer, Bingham Hunter lists six steps that help as we pray for God’s guidance. First, beware of the media’s role in clouding our understanding of God’s will, particularly how the media often confuses needs and wants. Second, make Bible reading and study a priority. Third, take seriously the need for obedience. “Basic Christian obedience is essential to praying according to God’s will.” Fourth, keep in mind that God’s will for your life is not the same as His will for other peoples’ lives. Fifth, learn from others, especially more mature Christians. And finally, pray for others and ask them to pray for you.

As you work through these six steps, remember God’s promise in James 1:5 to provide wisdom to those who ask. You may want to include some time praying through Psalm 25 or the following prayer for guidance.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 25:1-10

Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. - Psalm 25:6

The late author Alex Haley, of *Roots* fame, loved to tell of the time when, as a boy, he and his grandmother faced eviction from their Tennessee home. Hard times had caused the family to get behind in the mortgage payment. But Grandma Cynthia received a special gift that Christmas, an envelope which contained a receipt--showing that the mortgage had been paid--and a roll of money totaling twenty-seven dollars. Grandma Cynthia got down on her knees and offered a prayer of thanksgiving, tears flowing uncontrollably down her cheeks.

Alex Haley said that even with all his successes, nothing touched him as deeply as that moment. We can understand why. Such real-life illustrations of God's faithfulness are unforgettable. And just as Haley never tired of telling how God met Grandma Cynthia's need, we must never tire of rehearsing God's faithfulness to us, or praising Him for His love.

That's why we have included several psalms of praise in our study, and we'll share two more before the month is over. Here David praised God because those who trust in Him will not ""be put to shame"" (vv. 2-3). Does that mean believers will never lose their homes to foreclosure or suffer other setbacks? No, God doesn't promise to shield us from every blow.

No matter what may happen, however, God will never abandon us and leave us looking foolish for trusting Him. We may stagger under the load sometimes, but God will not let us fall.

When you realize the blessing of God's saving presence, your prayer becomes: ""Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths"" (v. 4). There is no other way worth learning about, and no other path worth following.

David also asked God to remember him, not according to his sins, but according to God's goodness and love (v. 7). The latter word, love, is another occurrence of that wonderful Hebrew word describing God's unfailing or loyal love. In fact, this same root, ""hesed,"" also appears two other times (vv. 6, 10).

Verse 10 is a great summary of praise: all of God's ways are faithful for those who obey Him. The only proper response we can make to such love is praise.

Last Sunday we suggested that you add one psalm a day to your regular Today Bible reading schedule.

Since our text for today is a psalm, you may want to take an extra minute to read the rest of Psalm 25. These verses contain a prayer for God's continued help and deliverance, and also reaffirm the greatness of our Father's faithful dealings with His children. And by the way, if you have a ""Grandma Cynthia"" story in your own life, be sure to include it in your testimony on Thanksgiving Day!

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 26

Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have led a blameless life. I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. - Psalm 26:1

Constant complaining can injure a person's health, according to Dr. Matthew Budd of the Harvard Medical School, "There is no action, just anger and hostility. Chronic complainers put themselves in a heightened mood state that disrupts the physiology of the body. There is a higher risk of heart disease associated with anger and hostility... People who complain a lot see themselves as victims. They are prone to an increased sense of hopelessness, which is tied to [stress and] depression."

The antidote for a complaining or bitter spirit is trust in the Lord, especially in His justice. Rather than worrying or becoming angry, we should follow David's example in today's reading and pray for vindication. His prayer is neatly summarized in verse 1, which is also our verse for today. The request—justice. The doer—God. The basis—the innocence and faith of the psalmist.

The plea of innocence was not a proud or blind one, for David confessed his sinfulness in other psalms. Here he invited God to examine him, preferred God's house over the "assembly of evildoers," and cited righteous actions as evidence of his worshipful heart. He didn't claim perfection, only a certainty that what he was suffering was undeserved.

Assuming God accepted his claim, and assuming His sovereign power as well, David renewed his prayer for vindication. David's righteousness could not save him—he needed the mercy and redemption of the Lord (v. 11). Verse 12 is a beautiful, confident conclusion: "My feet stand on level ground; in the great assembly I will praise the Lord." Level ground is smooth; there are no hidden holes or stumbling blocks. In the same way, God's justice is the most secure place to take a stand.

If even secular researchers can see the danger of a bitter or critical attitude, so should we.

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 28

Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy. - Psalm 28:6

An annual survey by Massachusetts Institute of Technology asks Americans what invention they hate most but can't live without. This year, the cell phone earned this dubious distinction, with the alarm clock and television as runners-up. A full 30 percent of the survey's respondents named the cell phone as the top "love it, hate it" part of their lives. They like the freedom it gives them to communicate, but dislike the feeling that they are never away from work or truly alone.

Just as we may hate it but feel still we need a cell phone, because of pride we hate to ask for God's mercy, even though we know we need it. In today's psalm, we find a model prayer for mercy. It begins with a call to the Lord. He's the only one who can hear and answer, and encouragingly, He certainly will answer—He's a dependable Rock. To David, an unanswered prayer would be like death (v. 1). He went on to acknowledge God's justice with fear and trembling. Evil people show no respect for the Lord and would be torn down. David knew that he had done wrong, but he still honored and worshiped God and prayed not to share their terrible fate.

The psalmist had such confidence in answered prayer that he immediately rejoiced in the gift of God's mercy: "My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to Him in song" (v. 7). Why did God say yes? Because it is in His nature to do so. He is the strength and shield of His people, a "fortress of salvation" for His chosen king. When we as weak people need help, forgiveness, protection, and so much more, God delights to answer our trusting prayers with His power, wisdom, and love.

In response to the final line of today's psalm, sing "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" to close your time of personal devotions and prayer. Singing hymns and choruses as part of your devotions can add another dimension to your walk with the Lord. If you don't have a hymnbook at home, you can buy one at your local Christian bookstore. Because they are printed in large quantities, many are quite inexpensive. Purchase one soon and begin putting it to good use!

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 30

You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy. - Psalm 30:11

When the United States imprisoned Japanese-Americans during World War II, some of them coped through music. In fact, swing bands popped up in all the internment camps. “The music got our minds off the war and what was happening to us,” said one bandleader. “Because we were so concerned about the music, it took our minds off of the bad things. I’m sure prisoners of all kinds do this kind of thing—find some way to take your mind off of your misery. Otherwise, you’d go crazy.”

Making music helped Japanese-Americans endure their difficult and unjust situation. At one level, it transformed grief into happiness, at least for the younger people. At a spiritual level, transforming weeping into dancing is what God is all about, as David testified in today’s psalm of thanksgiving. He had wanted to replace the tabernacle with a permanent place of worship, but God had determined it would be David’s son who would be given this privilege, not David (cf. 2 Sam. 7). For someone who loved the Lord as passionately as he did, this must have been a cause of grief. Later, God gave the king an opportunity to buy the land for the future temple as part of his public repentance for numbering the army, and he prepared selected building materials as well (see 1 Chron. 21–22). How thrilled David must have been that God allowed him to do this! His sorrow was turned into joy. His heart was so much in this project that he even composed a psalm for a day he would never see—the day his son Solomon dedicated the finished temple.

What do you want God to change in your life? What do you know that He needs to change? We serve a God who transforms weeping into dancing, so pray in faith about this issue today. There is no need to whine, demand, or doubt. He already knows your need and wants His very best for your life. You can step forward boldly in prayer and believe that He will do whatever is necessary to clothe you with His joy (v. 11).

[Devotional from Moody Bible Institute](#)

Psalm 31

Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love. - Psalm 31:16

North Korea is the country that most intensely persecutes Christians, according to a World Watch List updated annually by the Open Doors organization. Other areas high on the list include Saudi Arabia, Laos, the central highlands of Vietnam, and Iran. In the isolated Communist nation of North Korea, tens of thousands of believers have been executed or imprisoned for being Christians—to practice one’s faith openly is very dangerous. Yet reports indicate the church there continues to grow!

How can we pray about this persecution? The psalmist showed us a way in today’s reading. Though we don’t know the exact situation, David seemed to be faced with a murderous conspiracy (v. 13). In the face of trouble, he took refuge in the Lord and proclaimed his faith in God’s strength, trustworthiness, loving care, and ability to rescue and guide him. He believed that God saw and understood the anguish of his soul and had already responded with grace (v. 8).

David’s faith enabled him to rejoice, but his pain was real and he didn’t pretend otherwise. He spoke of sorrow, grief, groaning, and affliction. Both body and soul were in agony—he compared himself to broken pottery. Socially, he was an object of contempt. His friends had deserted him. His joy was not a smiley-button pasted on over the pain—rather, it was deeper than the pain. That’s why he was able to say, “‘You are my God,’ My times are in your hands.” He trusted God’s lovingkindness to display itself at just the right time to save him (vv. 14–16).

Are you in a situation in which you or your family feel directly or indirectly persecuted for your faith? Or perhaps are you experiencing other sorts of troubles and difficulties? God sees and cares about your circumstances and feelings. Like the psalmist, cry out to Him. Describe the situation, affirm your trust in Him, and call on Him to rescue, vindicate, and give you hope. As Paul said: “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Rom. 12:12; cf. 2 Cor. 4:7–12).

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