

unshakable hope

Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Group One – Psalms 1-41

Few books of the Bible have resonated with me and offered more profound hope than the Psalms. During my battles with depression and anxiety, the Psalms brought me comfort and peace. In moments of intense loneliness and despair, they reminded me of God's steadfast presence – "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...you are with me." When burdened by the weight of my transgressions, the Psalms pointed me to God's grace and forgiveness – "I acknowledged my sin...and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." When I struggled with insecurity and self-doubt, the Psalms affirmed my significance and worth in the eyes of God – "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." And amidst trials and tribulations, the Psalms were a wellspring of inspiration, underscoring God's majesty, power, and sovereignty.

It is no wonder that Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria who was exiled five times by four Roman emperors said, "I believe that a man can find nothing more glorious than these Psalms; for they embrace the whole life of man, the affections of his mind, and the motions of his soul."

The term "psalm" originated around three hundred years before Christ, when the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek (known as the Septuagint), and it has been with us ever since. The Hebrew word for "psalms" is *tihillim*, which means "praises," while in the Greek, the word is *psalmos*, denoting "the striking of the chords of musical instruments." Thus, the Psalms served as the divinely inspired hymnbook for the people of Israel because they were not merely read but sung. For instance, when the Levites led the Hebrews in worshiping the LORD in I Chronicles 16, they sang the

psalms, specifically Psalm 105. Even Jesus and His disciples sang the Psalms during the Passover meal, according to Matthew 26:30.

Written over a span of 900 years, the Psalms constitute a rich anthology of prayers, poems, and hymns authored by an array of writers. King David, for instance, penned at least 73 psalms, while the sons of Korah wrote 11, and Asaph authored 12. Moses, King Solomon, and Heman also made significant contributions, while the authorship of 50 Psalms remains unknown. Bible scholars believe that Ezra the priest meticulously arranged the Psalms, grouping them thematically to correspond with the first five books of the Old Testament. This arrangement is as follows:

- Group One (Psalms 1-41) – Corresponds with Genesis
- Group Two (Psalms 42-72) – Corresponds with Exodus
- Group Three (Psalms 73-89) – Corresponds with Leviticus
- Group Four (Psalms 90-106) – Corresponds with Numbers
- Group Five (Psalms 107-150) – Corresponds with Deuteronomy

It is not surprising, therefore, that Martin Luther dubbed the Psalms a “mini-Bible,” and Athanasius hailed them as “the epitome of the whole Scriptures.” Hence, if there is any book in the Bible worthy of our study and attention, it is Psalms. Its expansive nature, with 150 chapters and 2,461 verses, makes it the largest book in the Bible, necessitating the presentation of this devotional journal in four separate volumes. This first volume will cover Psalms 1-41, most of which were written by David.

To maximize your devotional experience, read at least one psalm daily and apply the SOAP methodology to delve deeper into the text. SOAP is an acronym that stands for Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer, that was formulated by Pastor Wayne Cordeiro. If you miss a day, extend yourself grace and continue on the next day. I believe that if you persevere in doing your devotions,

your knowledge of this incredible book will deepen, your faith will be enlarged, and you will go on to enjoy an unshakable hope.

May God bless you richly!

Gary Shiohama

“The Psalms are a Little Bible, wherein everything contained in the entire Bible is beautifully and briefly comprehended.”

~ Martin Luther

Instructions on How to SOAP

Before you begin your devotional journey through the book of Psalms, find a quiet place where you can spend at least 30 minutes with the LORD. This may be in the morning before you start your day, or in the afternoon or evening. Before you do anything further, first pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word.

Now, turn to Day 1 in your booklet and read the chapter. We suggest that you read it more than once, and as you do, be on the lookout for the verse that stands out above the rest. It may be a particular word or phrase that jumps out at you – whatever it is, look for the verse that speaks to you.

For example, let's say your Scripture reading for the day is Matthew 6, and the verse that stands out to you is verse 33. You would then write it out under the heading, "Scripture."

Scripture

Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

After you write down the verse, under the heading, "Observation," share any thoughts you have about the verse. Feel free to consult your study Bible or other resources for further insights. You might write something like this:

Observation

In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus told His disciples that they shouldn't worry about anything because He cares for them. He even goes so far as to say that He cares about birds and flowers. In this passage, Jesus taught that I need to put Him first – 'seek first the kingdom of God,' and He'll take care of me.

After you write out your observations, jot down under the heading, “Application,” how you can apply the verse to your life. You may write something like this:

Application

I've been experiencing a lot of anxiety lately. This verse is a great reminder that I need to trust God more, and worry less. I also need to focus on the things of God like His kingdom and His righteousness, and not on worldly pursuits that tend to consume my life. It's good to know that if I put Jesus first, He will take care of my needs.

Finally, write out a prayer based on the verse you choose. Your prayer can be as long or as short as you like, and you can also pray for whatever else is on your heart.

Prayer

Dear God, as you know, I've been overwhelmed with worry over my job and financial situation. Lord, please forgive me for not putting you first and trusting you to take care of me. Please help me to make you my highest priority and to seek your kingdom and righteousness first. Please provide for my needs and help me to trust you more. In Jesus' name, Amen.

After you complete your SOAP for the day, consider multiplying the blessing you received by sharing it with others. You can do this through text, email, by posting it on social media, or by sharing it in person. Try it just once, and both you and others will be blessed!

DAY 1 ~ PSALM 1

The Two Paths

Writing under the pen name John Oxenham, the 19th-century poet William Arthur Dunkerley crafted a true masterpiece titled, “The Ways,” which captured the essence of our very first psalm. He eloquently wrote:

“To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
And the High Soul climbs the High way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way, and a Low.
And every man decideth
The Way his soul shall go.”

In this insightful piece, Oxenham depicted the manifold paths of life, emphasizing the pivotal choice between the High and Low Ways – a concept captured in Psalm 1. Indeed, this inaugural chapter serves as the gateway to the Psalms, delineating the age-old battle between good and evil, between righteousness and unrighteousness – the two paths we must choose from. Although the author of this psalm remains unnamed, these words resound with clarity regarding the outcomes of righteous and wicked living. What stands out to you in this chapter, and what does the writer say are the keys to living a blessed life? SOAP your favorite verse.

DAY 2 ~ PSALM 2

A Laughingstock

On February 1, 2020, China launched a full-scale assault on Christianity when its Administrative Measures for Religious Groups went into effect. Here's what one prominent media outlet wrote about the crackdown: "The Chinese government is destroying crosses, burning bibles, closing churches, and forcing Christian believers to sign papers renouncing their faith as the crackdown on religious congregations in Beijing and several provinces intensifies."

Religious persecution against Christians is nothing new – it's been going on for centuries – and it's rooted in sinful man's rebellion against God, as depicted in Psalm 2. What does this chapter tell us about what will happen to nations that rage against God, as opposed to those who "kiss the Son?" (See Psalm 33:12 and Psalm 110:6). Share your thoughts about verse 4. What is God laughing at? How do you think our nation will fare if Jesus returned today? SOAP your favorite verse in this chapter.

DAY 3 ~ PSALM 3

Under Attack!

This is the first of David's 73 psalms, and it was written against the backdrop of rape, murder, and betrayal as elaborated in II Samuel 15-18. As the story goes, one day David's favorite son, Absalom, murdered his half-brother, Amnon (David's oldest son), because Amnon raped their sister, Tamar. Fearing his father's retribution, Absalom fled, leading to years of estrangement between father and son. Possibly embittered by David's inaction to reach out to him, Absalom began plotting to overthrow his father as king. This psalm was David's prayer as he fled from Absalom's treachery. If you've ever been in anguish because someone was out to get you, especially a family member, this prayer will resonate with you.

One final note before you SOAP. You'll notice that the word *Selah* appears at the end of verses 2 and 5 in this chapter. You'll find it 69 other times in the Psalms. *Selah* was a musical notation signifying rest, which meant that the singers and musicians who sang this psalm were to rest or pause every time they came upon this word. In fact, the Amplified Bible translation of Psalm 3:2 reads, "Many are saying of me, 'There is no help for him in God.' *Selah* [pause, and calmly think of that]." This interjection is a great reminder that we should seriously slow down, pause, and think about what the psalmist has written.

DAY 4 ~ PSALM 4

Need Relief?

Some Bible commentators have expressed the view that Psalm 4 should be treated as a single unit along with Psalm 3. This may explain why David didn't tell us the circumstances when he wrote this chapter, as they were identical to what he experienced in chapter 3. Regardless, one fact is clear: David was in dire straits according to verse 1. The Hebrew word for "distress" means a "tight space," whereas the Hebrew word for "relief" means "open space." David's choice of these words could have depicted a situation where he was surrounded and hemmed in by his enemies, but God intervened and created "open space" for him to escape. As you SOAP one of the verses in this chapter, reflect on some of the ways the Lord has provided open space for you at a time when you felt hemmed in.

By the way, one of the best Bible tools for looking up Hebrew and Greek words is Biblehub.com. After going to the site, enter the verse you're looking for. After the verse appears, click on the appropriate tab at the top. For example, if your verse is in the Old Testament, click on the Hebrew tab, and if it's in the New Testament, click on the Greek tab at the top of the screen. This will take you to the verse in the original language. To look up a specific word, click on the Strong's number in the left-hand column corresponding to the word you are researching. This will take you to all of the definitions of the word in the original language. Use this resource, and before you know it you'll be on your way to becoming a Hebrew and Greek scholar!

DAY 5 ~ PSALM 5

The Man or Woman God Blesses

At the top of this psalm (as well as Psalm 4), there is a superscription that says, “To the choirmaster: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.” In case you’re wondering, superscriptions are headings that may identify the writer, provide background information, and give musical instructions concerning the psalm. Superscriptions are common throughout the Psalms, and Bible scholars consider them part of the inspired text because they are contained in the original manuscripts. The superscription in this chapter emphasizes the fact that this psalm was written by David and it was to be sung. In reading this psalm, what does it say about the kind of man or woman God blesses and doesn’t bless? What does this psalm teach us about the kind of man David was?

DAY 6 ~ PSALM 6

Dark Night of the Soul

Back in the sixth century, Cassiodorus, who was a Christ-follower and Roman statesman, described this chapter along with six others (Psalm 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143) as penitential psalms because the writers expressed deep sorrow over sin in each of these psalms. That certainly was the case here as David poured out his heart to the LORD in much anguish although there is no explicit confession of sin. A close reading of this psalm also suggests that David was suffering physically because he asked God for healing as he continued to come under attack from his enemies. It must have seemed like his whole world was collapsing in on him. Can you relate to how David felt and prayed? What confidence did David express in what God will do for him? SOAP your favorite verse.

DAY 7 ~ PSALM 7

When Someone is Out to Get You

This psalm is referred to in the superscription as a “Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite.” Scholars aren’t too certain what a *shiggaion* is – it was most likely an ancient musical term that designated how the psalm was to be sung. And as it says in the superscription, this particular psalm was written in response to a man named Cush, who was an enemy of David. Cush may be the same person in II Samuel 16:5-8, who is referred to as “Shimei” – a henchman of King Saul, whom he dispatched to kill David. As you read each word and phrase carefully, pay special attention to David’s sense of desperation, his unwavering faith, and what he asked the LORD to do.

DAY 8 ~ PSALM 8

What a Name

This psalm, which may have been prompted by David's awe-inspiring observation of the night sky, has a distinctly different tone than the ones we just read because it is filled with joyful adoration and praise. Can you see the comparison of this chapter to the book of Genesis? Verse 1 and 9 share the same stirring declaration: "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Notice that the first "LORD" is in all caps, while the second one is not. When "LORD" is in all caps, it represents the four Hebrew letters YHWH, the proper name of God. YHWH transliterated as Yahweh, refers to God's self-existence and expresses that He is eternal and uncreated (see Exodus 3:13-15). Yahweh appears in the Scriptures roughly 6,800 times, and the shortened version is Yah, which appears at the end of names like Jeremiah, Zechariah, Isaiah, Nehemiah, and Zephaniah to indicate that they belong to Him. (Google each name to find out what it means). When "Lord" is lower-cased, it is the Hebrew word Adonai, which refers to His sovereignty but is not His proper name. Why do you think David used both Yahweh and Adonai in this passage? SOAP your favorite verse.

DAY 9 ~ PSALM 9-10

God Wins

One of the unusual features of the Hebrew Old Testament is that selected chapters in the book of Psalms, Proverbs, and Lamentations were written as alphabetic acrostics. These acrostics start with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *aleph*, and end with the last letter, *tav*. This means the first line begins with *aleph*, the second line begins with *beth*, and so forth, until the last line begins with *tav*. Psalm 9 is an acrostic of the first 11 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, while Psalm 10 continues the pattern with the last 11 letters. (FYI, a line may be comprise more than one verse.) This unusual arrangement has led many to conclude that Psalms 9 and 10 are, in reality, one psalm.

According to Psalm 9's superscription (note Psalm 10 lacks a superscription and has a title provided by the editors of your translation), the psalm is addressed "To the choirmaster according to Muth-labben." Other translations read, "To the Chief Musician. To the tune of 'Death of the Son.'" Most scholars believe that Muth-labben referred to a type of musical instrument or a popular tune of that time, unrelated to Jesus. Now take your time and read both psalms. What are some common themes that unite them? Write down and SOAP your favorite verse.

DAY 10 ~ PSALM 11 Standing Strong

This psalm by David was written against the backdrop of rampant wickedness, escalating crime, bloodshed, violence, widespread corruption, and national upheaval. In the midst of this chaos, one of David's advisors urged him to "flee like a bird to your mountain," essentially telling him to "run for the hills!" However, David did the opposite because of his unwavering faith in God, which is evident throughout this psalm. It is no wonder that this psalm is referred to as a psalm of confidence, for it is bursting with certainty and hope. Psalms 16, 23, 27, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, and 131 are also considered psalms of confidence. So, what was David's reaction to his friend? SOAP what you found to be most inspiring and hopeful.

DAY 11 ~ PSALM 12

A Culture Without God

By any measurement, more people are turning away from the faith than ever before. Survey after survey indicates that more people in our country classify themselves as “nones” or religiously unaffiliated. A recent poll published in USA Today even found that nearly 75 percent of Christian young people fall away from the faith after they graduate high school. If the culture in which David lived wasn't wicked enough, it was exacerbated by the fact that people then had also abandoned God. As you SOAP one of the verses in this chapter, consider what God would have you do to help draw people back to Jesus. Finally, please note that according to the superscription, this psalm by David was a Sheminith, which was most likely an 8-stringed lyre.

DAY 12 ~ PSALM 13

When God Forgets You

In Psalm 12, David felt all alone because he was surrounded by the wicked and because those who were his brothers in the faith had abandoned God. In this psalm, David felt even more alone because he sensed that God had forgotten him. Was it true? Have you ever felt this way? What was David's only prayer in this psalm? Did God answer His prayer? SOAP what you learned from this psalm.

DAY 13 ~ PSALM 14 and 53

The Foolish Man

Both of these Davidic psalms are nearly identical, offering a harsh condemnation of humanity's corrupt nature and unbelief. These chapters closely resemble what the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:18-25 (please read it). In these two psalms, David labeled the person without faith as a "fool," which means "senseless" or "stupid" in Hebrew. In Romans 1:21, Paul characterized the unbeliever as "foolish," which in Greek means "unintelligent." Furthermore, the Greek word for "foolish" is *asunetos*, from which we get the word "synthesize," indicating that a fool is unable to synthesize and structure information in a meaningful way. This concept is illustrated in Romans 1:19-20. What do you think the phrase, "They are without excuse" means at the end of verse 20? What hope is there for unbelief and sin?

DAY 14 ~ PSALM 15

Entering the Presence of God

During the time of David and before the Temple was constructed, a tent was erected on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem where people came to meet and worship God. This tent, also referred to as the Tabernacle, housed the Ark of the Covenant and was considered the dwelling place of God. David had this special place in mind when he wrote this brief psalm, which provided instructions on how to enter into Yahweh's presence. Today there is no Tabernacle or Temple, yet we can still enter into God's presence. What do the following verses say about how we can do that: Ephesians 3:11-12, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 10:19, James 4:8, and Romans 5:2?

DAY 15~ PSALM 16

Proclamations and a Prophecy

The first half of this psalm (verses 1-7) contains several inspiring proclamations by David regarding God and the people of faith. For example, he said of the LORD in verse 1, “I have no good apart from you.” In other words, he declared that God was his highest treasure! And in verse 3, he referred to believers as “excellent ones,” which in Hebrew means “majestic.” Share your thoughts about God being our highest treasure and that He views us as “majestic” ones.

The second half of the psalm (verses 8-11) is quoted by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:22-28 in relation to the resurrection of Christ. Why do you think Peter quoted David, and what relationship does this passage have with the resurrection? In case you’re wondering, Psalm 16 is referred to as a Miktam, which might have been a musical term, though its actual meaning is unclear. SOAP the verse that stands out to you.

DAY 16 ~ PSALM 17

Desperate for God

This is the first of five psalms considered intercessory prayers, based on the use of the Hebrew word *tephillah* in the superscription. The other four are Psalms 86, 90, 102, and 142. *Tephillah* is translated as “prayer,” and it signifies a type of lament or entreaty, either for oneself or for others. In this particular psalm, it is apparent that David is under full-scale attack from his unnamed enemies, compelling him to desperately seek God. Pay special attention to what David said to God and what he prayed for. SOAP your favorite verse, and model your own prayer after David’s intercession.

DAY 17 ~ PSALM 18

Hymn of Praise

At 50 verses, Psalm 18 is the fourth longest psalm in the Book of Psalms, and it is so inspiring and rich with truth that you may want to take some extra time reading through it. According to the superscription, this psalm was David's hymn of praise to God for delivering him from all of his enemies. Interestingly, this psalm is also found in II Samuel 22 (take a look at it), and it appears to have been written toward the end of David's life. As you read this psalm, observe the following:

1. Don't miss the seven different metaphors David used to describe God in verses 1-2.
2. Notice the dramatic imagery that David employed to paint a picture of how God intervened in his life (verses 7-15).
3. Pay attention to what David said are the requirements for receiving divine blessings (verses 20-27).
4. Make note of David's description of God's magnificent character and how He acts on our behalf (verses 27-50).

Copy down your favorite verses and write out your own hymn of praise for all that God has done for you.

DAY 18 ~ PSALM 19

God Revealed

Some have argued that because of its two distinct subject matters, this psalm should be separated into two books. Whether two or one, the unifying theme of Psalm 19 is the revelation of God – He reveals Himself to us in His creation (verses 1-6), and through His Word (verses 7-14). David begins the psalm with one of the most awe-inspiring verses in the Bible: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” What is God’s glory? In his commentary on Psalms, Max Anders said that God’s glory is “the sum total of His divine attributes – His holiness, sovereignty, righteousness, grace, truth, goodness, mercy, justice, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and more,” and it is manifested in His creation. It’s also worth noting that the words “declare” and “proclaims” in verse 1 are participles, conveying that the declaration and proclamation are continuous. A more accurate translation would be, “The heavens keep on declaring the glory of God, and the sky above keep on proclaiming His handiwork.”

David also tells us that God reveals Himself – His character, nature, heart, will, works, purposes, and much more through His Word. He provides us with seven reasons why the Bible can be trusted. SOAP your favorite verse, and write down some of the ways God has revealed Himself to you.

DAY 19 ~ PSALM 20

Prayers for a Leader

As the king of Israel, David faced immense challenges, including leading his army into battle against the enemy. On the eve of one such battle, the Jews gathered to pray for their leader, and in this psalm, David described that prayer. Their intercession acknowledged that David needed help from the Divine and their own well-being depended on his success. How did the people pray for David, and what does this psalm teach us about the importance of praying for our leaders? SOAP the verse that stands out to you, and close by praying for our leaders, especially our pastors.

DAY 20 ~ PSALM 21

Don't Forget to Say, 'Thank You'

In the last chapter, the people prayed for King David as he prepared to go to war. In this chapter David offered a prayer of thanksgiving for hearing their prayers and for granting him victory. Psalm 20 is a pre-war psalm and Psalm 21 is post-war prayer, and they should be viewed together as a single psalm. What stands out to you about David's prayer? What does it teach us about expressing our gratitude to God for answered prayer?

DAY 21 ~ PSALM 22

Standing on Holy Ground

Before you proceed any further, I urge you to pause, open your Bible to Psalm 22, and read it with deep solemnity and reverence. Take a moment to absorb its weight and its sacredness, then return to this page and continue reading.

Did you read it? Did its impact strike you like a sudden collision? It should, for you are now on holy ground. This is Golgotha, where Christ bore the weight of humanity's sins upon the cross. In this riveting chapter, penned by David between 1010 and 970 B.C., when he was around 35 years old, we are transported across the ages to witness Jesus' anguish, His innermost turmoil, and the desperate prayer He uttered to His Father in His final moments.

Much of what you have just read lies beyond the Gospel narratives of our Lord's crucifixion, for these were His secret meditations, unveiled by the Holy Spirit to David. As you revisit this chapter, consider the following questions:

1. Why did Jesus cry out to His Father, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
2. How did David depict the depth of Jesus' suffering upon the cross?
3. What petitions did Jesus offer to His Father as He clung to life?
4. What stirrings of thought and emotion does this passage evoke within your heart?

DAY 22 ~ PSALM 23

The LORD is my Shepherd

No psalm is more beloved than the twenty-third psalm, and it may even be the most cherished chapter in the entire Bible. Charles Spurgeon, who was known the “Prince of Preachers,” once referred to it as the “Pearl of the Psalms.” Indeed, it is, for no psalm has wiped away more tears, comforted more anxious hearts, and emboldened more timid people than Psalm 23. Writing from the perspective of someone who was once a shepherd of sheep, David extols God as the Shepherd of our souls, which is the theme of this six-verse masterpiece. What blessings do we get to experience because the LORD is our Shepherd? Compare this passage to what Jesus said about Himself in John 10:11-15. Consider memorizing parts or all of it and SOAP your favorite verse.

DAY 23 ~ PSALM 24

The King of Glory

Bible scholars are not in agreement as to why David wrote this psalm, but there are at least two possibilities. First, David might have composed it as an “entrance psalm,” to celebrate the entrance of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem (read II Samuel 6). The more likely possibility is that this is a Messianic psalm, portraying the second coming of Jesus when He triumphantly takes His place in the Temple in Jerusalem and reigns on earth for a thousand years. Legendary preacher F. B. Meyer wrote, “This psalm is accomplished in us when Jesus enters our hearts as our King to reign, and it will have its full realization when the earth and its population welcome Him as its Lord.”

After carefully reading the psalm, write down why you believe this is an “entrance psalm” or a Messianic psalm and explain your reasoning. Regardless of what David had in mind, this psalm portrays Jesus in all His lofty grandeur. Be sure to SOAP your favorite verse.

DAY 24 ~ PSALM 25

A Prayer for Dark Days

This is another acrostic psalm by David, meaning that each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. However, one letter is used twice and one letter is omitted. It is not known why David wrote this psalm, but it is clear that these were dark days for him. As you read through this psalm, first pay close attention to how David felt. Can you relate to anything he said? Second, notice what David prayed for. Are there any words or ideas repeated throughout the psalm that might give you a clue as to the central theme of this passage? SOAP the prayer that resonated with you most.

DAY 25 ~ PSALM 26

A Gutsy Question

David was apparently accused of consorting with hypocrites and evildoers, and he was so confident of his innocence that he asked the LORD to “vindicate” him in verse 1 (the Hebrew word for “vindicate” means to “judge”). In verse 2 he followed up by imploring God to “prove,” “try,” and “test” him. It’s a gutsy request for sure. Would you ever ask God to prove, try, and test you? If you did, what do you think His test would reveal about you? In II Corinthians 13:5, Paul said that we should examine ourselves to see whether we are of the faith. As you read this chapter, take a moment to reflect upon and examine your own faith.

DAY 26 ~ PSALM 27

David's Response to Trouble

Even though David was a man after God's own heart, his life was marked by rejection, tragedy, adultery, murder, struggle, and failure. This psalm was penned during one of those times when things weren't going his way, and the forces of darkness were once again assembled against him. Nevertheless, David exuded an unshakable confidence in the LORD (verses 1-6), and at the same time, he cried out to Him in desperation (verses 7-14). It's understandable, after reading this psalm, why God said that David had a heart after Him – because whenever trouble arose, David ran to God, not from Him. As you meditate on David's words, personalize his prayer and make it your own, asking God to give you a heart after Him.

DAY 27 ~ PSALM 28

When God is Silent

Have you noticed that God doesn't necessarily answer prayers immediately? Sometimes He may not answer a prayer for days, weeks, months, or even years. He obviously has His reasons, and our only recourse when we don't hear back right away is to persist in prayer and wait on Him. That ostensibly was the issue here – the LORD didn't answer David in what he thought was a timely manner, which is why David pleaded with Him not to be deaf to his cries. David considered God's silence to be his worst-case scenario – “lest...I become like those who go down to the pit,” and it's ours as well. What hope would we have if God didn't hear and answer our prayers? It would be the pits! As we see in this psalm, however, David didn't give up, and his heart continued to trust in God.

DAY 28 ~ PSALM 29

God in the Storm

Have you ever been caught up in a tempest accompanied by perilous lightning strikes, cyclonic winds, a deluge of rain, and deafening thunderclaps? If you have, it can be a terrifying experience that leaves you in awe. That's exactly what David experienced when a powerful storm swept through Israel one day, leading him to write this psalm, in which he vividly described a "theophany," or a manifestation of God in a form that is understandable to humans. Full of imagery, Psalm 29 is considered a "theophanic" psalm, similar to Psalm 18 (go back and read it). In case you're wondering, the word "Sirion" in verse 6 is a reference to Mount Hermon in northern Israel (see Deuteronomy 3:9). SOAP the verse that leaves you in awe!

DAY 29 ~ PSALM 30

A Grateful Heart

The superscription at the beginning of this psalm indicates that these 12 verses were written by David on the occasion of the dedication of the temple. Whenever we hear the words “David” and “temple” used in the same sentence, we automatically associate them with God’s temple, which he aspired to build. But as the story goes, it was his son Solomon who constructed the temple. In fact, David wasn’t even present at the dedication of the temple because he had died years earlier. Hence, the writing of this psalm had nothing to do with the actual temple but probably referred to King David’s home or palace. In case you’re wondering, the Hebrew word for “temple” can be translated as “house.” A close inspection of this chapter also suggests that David was healed from an illness that nearly cost him his life, so he also wrote this psalm to express praise and thanksgiving to God. SOAP the verse that stands out to you.

DAY 30 ~ PSALM 31

A Psalm Worth Quoting

One of the distinctions of this Davidic psalm is that it contains phrases that appear in other books of the Bible. For example, the phrase “terror on every side” in verse 13 must have appealed to the prophet Jeremiah, because it appears in his writings no less than six times – in Jeremiah 6:25, Jeremiah 20:3, Jeremiah 20:10, Jeremiah 46:5, Jeremiah 49:29, and Lamentations 2:22. Likewise, the phrase “those who pay regard to worthless idols” found in Psalm 31:6 appears in Jonah’s writings (Jonah 2:8), and whoever wrote Psalm 71 (possibly David) quotes the first verse in this chapter, “In you, O LORD, do I take refuge.” Most notably, Psalm 31:5 may have provided Jesus with the final words He uttered on this earth, “Into your hand I commit my spirit.” David’s words are impactful, not only because they are quoted elsewhere in the Bible, but because they were written at one of the lowest points in his life – when he was forsaken by his friends, which makes his words all the more meaningful. Take your time as you read through this psalm, and SOAP the verse that resonates most with your soul.

DAY 31 ~ PSALM 32

Coming Clean

This is the second of six penitential psalms (see Day 6 for a list of the others), and the first of 12 to be labeled a maskil, which in Hebrew means “instruction” or “teaching.” It is believed that this psalm, like Psalm 51, was written by David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba (II Samuel 11:1-5) and murdered her husband, Uriah (II Samuel 11:14-17), to cover up his illicit affair. It’s worth noting that it wasn’t until after Nathan called David out (II Samuel 12:1-9) that he confessed his treachery. It’s not known how long David kept his sins under wraps, but it was probably months rather than years. However long it was, David’s secret took a terrible toll on him as he describes in this psalm. Such is the destructive power of unconfessed sin. Because of his confession, however, God forgave David, and that led him to write this psalm to instruct others to confess their sins as well. SOAP the verse that stands out to you, and if you have any unconfessed sins, confess them to Him today.

DAY 32 ~ PSALM 33

Shout, Sing, and Give Thanks

The first thing you will notice about this psalm is that it doesn't have a superscription, which provides us with additional information about the psalm and may identify the author. As you may recall, superscriptions are found in the original manuscripts and are considered part of the inspired text. This psalm, however, does have a title given to it by the ESV translators: "The Steadfast Love of the LORD." Whenever a psalm lacks a superscription, it's likely part of the psalm that precedes it. Many Hebrew manuscripts for Psalms 32 and 33 support this view as they are treated as a single psalm. This implies that the superscription for Psalm 32, "A Maskil of David," would also apply to Psalm 33. If that's true, it indicates that David was endeavoring to provide us with some type of spiritual instruction, as that is the purpose of a maskil. Read the psalm and determine what David was trying to teach us, and SOAP the verse that inspires you.

DAY 33 ~ PSALM 34

Unshakable Hope

The nail-biting backdrop of this psalm is worthy of a Tom Clancy novel – awash with deception, treachery, political intrigue, assassination plots, and more. Israel’s national hero and giant-killer, David, is on the run from King Saul (read I Samuel 18:6-16 for the reasons), and now, according to the superscription, he is in the presence of Abimelech who “drove him out” after he “changed his behavior.” What exactly did this mean?

First, it’s essential to understand that Abimelech was a generic name given to all Philistine kings, similar to Caesar, which was a generic name for all Roman emperors. Abimelech’s real name was Achish, the king of Gath, where David fled, hoping that he could find refuge from Saul. Fearful that Achish would turn him over to Saul, David “changed his behavior,” meaning he feigned insanity, hoping it would compel the king to let him go, and he did.

Later in a moment of quiet and reflection, David wrote Psalm 34. What does this passage tell us about David’s unshakable hope, and what important insights does he share about the nature and character of God?

DAY 34 ~ PSALM 35

Fight On!

As we have seen from reading through the psalms, David was under constant fire from his enemies, whether from Saul before he became king or from foreign foes after he became king. Weary and battle-fatigued, Psalm 35 was David's plea for God to fight his battles for him (see Exodus 14:14, Deuteronomy 20:4, II Chronicles 20:15). Notice in verses 5-6 that he referred to "the angel of the LORD." He also mentioned "the angel of the LORD" in Psalm 34:7. These are the only two chapters in the entire book of Psalms where "the angel of the LORD" is mentioned, leading some commentators to speculate that Psalm 34 and 35 go together.

It is also worth noting that the expression "the angel of the LORD" is never mentioned in the New Testament after the birth of Christ, leading some to opine that in the Old Testament, "the angel of the LORD" was not an actual angel, but rather, a manifestation of Jesus. In the same way that David called on God to fight his battles, so should we! SOAP the verse that resonates with you the most.

DAY 35 ~ PSALM 36

An Oracle

When the editors of the ESV translated verse 1 in this psalm, they failed to translate a key Hebrew word, and it's the word *na'am*, which means "oracle." It's nowhere to be found in this verse, which reads, "Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart..." Instead, verse 1 should say: "An oracle concerning the transgression of the wicked within my heart..." Hence, the ESV failed to inform us that the first third of this psalm is an "oracle" or "an utterance." It's worth noting that the word "oracle" is found throughout the Old Testament, however, it is always used in connection with Yahweh and it is rendered, "an oracle of God." In this verse, however, the Hebrew reveals that this is not "an oracle of God," but instead, it is "an oracle of the wicked." The Hebrew grammar also suggests that the oracle was not spoken by the wicked, but rather, it was spoken about the wicked – and thus, the oracle paints a very dark and damning picture of the evildoer.

In the second third of the psalm, David contrasts the oracle of the wicked with the utter supremacy of God. Author and pastor, James Montgomery Boice points out that Psalm 36 is similar to Psalm 1 in that they both contrast good and evil, but with some differences. For instance, Psalm 1 begins by describing the righteous (verses 1-3) and then the wicked (verse 4), whereas Psalm 36 begins by describing the wicked (verses 1-4), and then the righteous (verses 5-12). Furthermore, Psalm 36 doesn't contrast two types of people like Psalm 1 does – it contrasts a wicked person with God. With that information in mind, read Psalm 36 and SOAP the verse that speaks to your heart.

DAY 36 ~ PSALM 37

Wise Words of an Old Man

This is another acrostic psalm by David in which every other verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are five acrostic psalms in Group One: Psalms 9, 10, 25, 34 and 37. The next time we see an acrostic psalm is in Group Five, where there are four: Psalms 111, 112, 119, and 145. Many commentators believe that David was an old man when he wrote this psalm, which may explain why, like the book of Proverbs, it is chock-full of wisdom concerning the ways of the godly and ungodly. Unlike most psalms, which are prayers directed toward God, this psalm is addressed to the reader.

As you read the psalm, be on the lookout for two phrases that are repeated throughout the passage. The first tells us that the wicked “will be cut off,” and the second informs us that the righteous “will inherit the land.” What do you think these phrases mean, and what, if any, connection does the second phrase have with what Jesus said in Matthew 5:5? SOAP the verse in this chapter that you like the most.

DAY 37 ~ PSALM 38

When You Hit Rock Bottom

Psalm 38, which is the second of six penitential psalms as they were labeled by Cassiodorus (see Day 6), is characterized by sorrow over, and confession of sin. What is clear from reading this psalm is that David became sick because of the sin or sins he committed. That's not to say that we will get sick every time we sin. We will not. However, there are instances in the Scriptures when God inflicted illness upon someone because they sinned, and that's the case here. To make matters worse for David, his friends and family abandoned him, and now he was all alone – he hit rock bottom. Now, ironically, the only who he could turn to was God – the one he sinned against, and that's exactly what he did. How good it is to know that we have a merciful God we can run to even after we sin against Him – and David wanted us to remember that. The word “memorial” in the superscription means “to bring to remembrance.” SOAP the verse you can relate to.

DAY 38 ~ PSALM 39

Life is Short

There are many similarities between Psalms 38 and 39, which were both written by David. For example, both speak of God's "rebuke" and "discipline," which was triggered by sin (Psalm 38:1 and Psalm 39:11); in both David acknowledges that his personal sin led to suffering (Psalm 38:4-5 and Psalm 39:8); in both David agonizes in silence as he waits to hear from God (Psalm 38:15 and Psalm 39:7); and both end with a cry to God for help (Psalm 38:21-22 and Psalm 39:12-13). What sets Psalm 39 apart from 38 is that in it, David contemplates the brevity of life. It's quite possible that the illness David suffered in chapter 38 sobered him up to the possibility that he could die, which is why he tackled this subject, thereby making chapter 39 a perfect follow-up to chapter 38. In the superscription, David references Jeduthun, who, along with Heman and Asaph, was a musician appointed to lead worship (II Chronicles 5:12). The mention of his name (he's also named in Psalm 62 and 77), may mean that this psalm was to be incorporated in temple worship.

DAY 39 ~ PSALM 40

When Life is the Pits

Someone who would have identified with this psalm was the prophet Jeremiah, who found himself in a life-threatening predicament after he prophesied about the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The Jews were so irritated by his message that they asked King Zedekiah for permission to banish the prophet into a cistern, and that's exactly what they did. Actually he was lowered into it by a rope because there wasn't any water in the underground receptacle, and what Jeremiah found at the bottom was a cesspool of mud. When one of the king's servants, Ebed-melech, heard of Jeremiah's plight, he asked Zedekiah if he could rescue the prophet from the slimy pit because if left unaided, he would die. With the king's consent, Ebed-melech took 30 men with him, and they lifted Jeremiah out of the miry bog and set him down on solid ground (read this inspiring story for yourself in Jeremiah 38:1-13). According to Psalm 40, what those men did for Jeremiah is precisely what God did for David (verse 2), and it's also what He does for us.

As you read the psalm, consider the following questions:

1. What "miry bog" do you find yourself in today?
2. What was David's reaction to being rescued by God?
3. What confidence did he express in the LORD?

DAY 40 ~ PSALM 41

Resolute Faith

Today, we reach the final chapter in the first grouping of psalms. Fittingly, it begins as it started in Psalm 1:1, with the Hebrew word *ehsher*, meaning blessed or happy. In Psalm 41:1, the blessed person is “the one who considers the poor.” The Hebrew word for “poor” means weak, needy, or thin, indicating that David likely referred to someone who was sick rather than financially destitute. Notably, the chapter concludes with a doxology and an “Amen and amen.” Like many other psalms written by David, this chapter highlights his resolute faith amidst sickness, sin, betrayal, and hate. Notice that he was the subject of spiteful gossip and his adversaries couldn’t wait for him to die. SOAP the verse you found most encouraging and hopeful.

DAY 41

Looking Back

Now that you've read through the first group of psalms, take a moment to reflect back on what you learned. In the space provided, write down the verses that you found most impactful and inspiring. How did God speak to you? As you look back at some of your prayers, which ones did God answer, and which ones do you need to keep praying? Name at least one key take-away from your time spent in God's Word.