

PSALMS 107-150

Bible Reading Schedule

8 Weeks

WEEK 1

Are you excited to complete the Book of Psalms with me?! Book Five is 107 to 150, which will highlight our Bible readings for the next six weeks. I will prepare a Psalm every day for your prayerful reading time. I am not sure what I will do with 119 since it is 178 verses long. We'll see. Thank you for faithfully reading in the Word of God and asking God to help you apply it to your life.

DAY 1 – Psalm 107

This is a very important Psalm as it emphasizes gratitude and recalls God's faithfulness. There's an important and timeless truth repeated in this Psalm besides the beauty of verse 1 and being thankful. Each time the people cried out to the Lord, he answered them. It is a fascinating Psalm with the rhythm of a hymn that highlights the consistency of God to help and intervene. I especially appreciate the message of verses 1 to 9 because it is about thanksgiving. But as I read on, this Psalm is more and more meaningful to me. Verse 6 begins the emphasis of pleading with God in prayer for help, and he is faithful each and every time. Verses 6, 13, 19, & 28 have the same wording on purpose. It is like a refrain in a song of worship, which isn't surprising since the Psalms are the worship songs for God's people. The first situation in verse 5 points to the need for provision and rescue from God, and he provides. Verse 11 tells us about rebellion and God's punishment, but when the people cried out to God for mercy, he saved them from their distress. In verse 17, some were dying and suffering because of their sin, and God responded to their cry for help. Some were in dire straits in verses 23 to 27, but when they cried out to God, he rescued them. Can you recall times in your life when you experienced the grace of God to provide, to save, to rescue, to forgive...? The Psalmist is encouraging us to remember the times when God "turns the desert into pools of water, the dry land into flowing springs." (V35) The NLT translates verse 43 this way, "Those who are wise will take all this to heart; they will see in our history the faithful love of the Lord." (V43) That summarizes the message of this Psalm so well. How have you seen the unfailing love of God throughout your life?

DAY 2 – Psalm 108

For the next few days, we will read psalms by David. To me, it is easy to recognize his fingerprints on this Psalm. He writes about his allies and his enemies. You can identify Psalms 57 & 60 in this Psalm. David's devotion presents itself in verses 1 to 5. These verses are my favorite and can easily be made personal through my own prayers modeled after David. Because of David's strong partnership with Manasseh, Ephraim, and Judah, his enemies are in trouble, including Moab, Philistia, and Edom. David acknowledges that at times the people of God have not turned to God for help. David says something that must have pleased the Lord, "for all human help is useless." (V12) God is grieved time and again when his people would trust in "horses and chariots" more than him. I think that is why the Lord was so pleased with David; he turned to God first. Verses 4 & 5 remind me of a worship song that we often sing. What catches your eye in this Psalm?

DAY 3 – Psalm 109

David is writing about his frustration concerning his accusers. He has tried to love them and pray for them, but it doesn't seem to make a difference. By verse 21, David has given the situation over to the Lord for his intervention and even vengeance. Instead of continuing to focus on those who hurt him, he prays to God for help, "Help me, O Lord my God! Save me because of your unfailing love." (V26) As if to say, when you are good to me Lord, they will notice and change their behavior. But nonetheless, may the psalmist's enemies experience disgrace and humiliation. Throughout the Psalm, David gives God ideas on how to punish his accusers, and he doesn't hold back. This seems to be a bit extreme with David suggesting a curse of a short life, pronounced guilt, a painful life for their children, and an overall appeal to retribution (Verses 7-15). After venting about these harmful results, David turns to pray for himself, and an emphasis on God's reputation being upheld. The message of the Psalm points to David's first response of vengeance, but then turns his anger into a prayer, releasing the need for justice into the hands of God. The process for David has a lesson for us. The Lord receives our complaints and helps us turn the corner from anger and retaliation to trusting God and praying for our own hearts to be right. How do you interpret this psalm? How might you apply David's example to your life?

DAY 4 – Psalm 110

This Psalm may appear to be inconsequential, but it is actually referred to by Jesus as well as in the Book of Acts and Hebrews. This points to the promise of the Messiah beginning with the first sentence, “The Lord said to my Lord...” Essentially, David viewed God’s messianic ruler as his superior. The connection was made clear in the Gospels with Jesus being the promised Messiah. The rest of verse 1 also was used as an announcement that Jesus now sits at the right hand of the Father, with this statement being used 8 different times in the New Testament. Jesus will ultimately rule over all the earth, but this will not come without intense war and punishment for the enemies of God. (Verses 5 & 6) Verse 4 is especially unique with a random reference to Melchizedek. We first read of Melchizedek in Genesis 14, but this appearance doesn’t explain the connection to Jesus. Without the Book of Hebrews, we wouldn’t understand that he was a type of Christ who would fulfill the promise of David’s dynasty accomplished through his descendant, namely Jesus. This short Psalm has deep and lasting meaning for believers as it affirms the promise of Jesus and his messianic kingdom lasting forever. What comes to mind as you read through this Psalm?

DAY 5 – Psalm 111

“A” is for “Almighty;”; “B” is for “Brilliant;”; “C” is for “Compassion ”; etc. (This is an example I made up to give you a glimpse of how the psalmist composed this psalm.) This Psalm uses the Hebrew alphabet to express worship and thanksgiving to God. This is called a Hebrew acrostic with appreciation for God’s character that motivates his righteous acts. The psalmist goes through this Psalm, Hebrew letter by Hebrew letter, to praise God. I think this is an exceptional Psalm and gives plenty of characteristics of our God: He is righteous, gracious, compassionate, faithful, just, trustworthy, upright, holy, and awe-inspiring, all of which are highlighted in this Psalm. Verse 2 reveals a key component of worship and prayer: “Great are the works of the Lord; they are PONDERED by all who delight in them.” The psalmist gives us an important aspect of prayer – pause and reflect. After the author slows down enough to appreciate God and his amazing deeds, he then has much to praise God for. Prayer is not meant to be a task, but rather spiritual communion with God. Adoration will flow freely as we spend time with the Lord and sense his presence. The only other thing I would suggest would be to pray Psalm 111 back to the Lord, to make it personal... “You, Lord, are gracious and compassionate.” “You provide food and remember your covenant.” This is a delightful, worshipful, inspiring Psalm to pray to the Lord. Give it a try!

DAY 6 – Psalm 112

This is another psalm that progresses alphabetically just like our reading yesterday. Maybe it is because of the emphasis on “the fear of the Lord,” but this reads a lot like Proverbs. The wise have reason to be happy and confident. Sometimes when I am reading a chapter in the Bible, I actually pick just one verse and make that my meditation. Like verse 7, “They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to care for them.” Don’t you think that is a thought-provoking idea to face bad news confidently with trust, knowing that God is in control? Too often, we are waiting for the next bad thing to happen. But holding on to the truth that God is at work and promises that good is sure to come, we can be at peace as well as content. These characteristics of a godly person help a believer remain steadfast and sure. It reminds me of the Apostle Paul’s word to the Corinthians – “So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.” (1 COR 15:58) This concludes our first week in Book Five of Psalms. We will be on this journey for seven weeks. Thank you for coming along!

WEEK 2

This week includes the shortest Psalm (#117) in the book, but next week we will enjoy the longest one (#119). For me, this week's psalms flow nicely and deeply as I read them. In each of these psalms, there are memorable verses that speak truth to us. "Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory..." (115:1), for example. Again, I am sure these are lesser-known psalms, but I think you will realize why they are included in the worship book of the Hebrews!

DAY 7 – Psalm 113

Doesn't this Psalm just roll off the tongue?! I am wondering what verse caught your eye? "From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised." (V3) It seems to me that this is a line in a song we sang when I first met the Lord in the late 70's. When our memory is jogged, our hearts are stirred. At least I felt stirred by this simple statement "from the rising of the sun..." Did you notice the contrast between God's exalted position and his heart for the poor, the needy, and the childless mother in this Psalm? The Psalmist elevates the Lord from verses 1 to 5 and then surprises us with God's concern for those in need. You might think a high and exalted King like our God would overlook the needs of the lowly. But not the God of the Scriptures, who is gracious and full of compassion, which we will clearly read in Psalm 116. How has this Psalm spoken to you?

DAY 8 – Psalm 114

Can you identify the events that the psalmist is highlighting? The author is reminding the reader of God's powerful activity in the past. This short Psalm was actually a fairly familiar song for the Jews because it has been noted that this was a hymn sung at the Passover meal in a Hebrew home. It might have been sung by the disciples when they shared the meal with Jesus in the upper room. This Psalm uniquely personifies nature, depicting the Red Sea, the Jordan River, and mountains trembling in awe and obedience to the Lord's presence and power. I am most intrigued by the way that the Psalmist paints a dramatic picture of nature. The mountains and hills "skip like rams," a poetic way of describing earthquakes and the trembling of creation when God establishes His sanctuary among His people. A short Psalm like this can surprise you with awe and worship. I felt that way as I read through this Psalm a couple of times. How are you responding to these words? Can you see why the Hebrews sang/sing this Psalm at the Passover meal?

DAY 9 – Psalm 115

Don't you just love the way the psalmist begins his prayer, "Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory!" (V1)? Also, the renouncing of idols and their uselessness is written in such a convincing way. (Verses 4-8) I appreciate the call and challenge of this Psalm, emphasizing trust and the blessings of God. I find these words to be so hopeful, leading me to want to worship the Lord and seek his face. The themes begin with the glory of God, then transition to the folly of idols, followed by the call to trust God, then there's God's past faithfulness and future blessings, all leading to praise. I am surprised I haven't recognized this Psalm previously. It is exceptional and expresses so many pertinent topics of spiritual life for the believer. Which theme in the Psalm are you identifying with? One translation uses the words "the Lord has been mindful of us." It reminds me of how precious God's thoughts are about us in Psalm 139:17-18. While we still have breath, let's praise the Lord (my interpretation of verse 17). I am sure to revisit this Psalm again and again. The Psalms have a beautiful way of enriching our souls. Don't you agree?!

DAY 10 – Psalm 116

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants." (V15) I think this is the most familiar verse to me in this Psalm. As I grow older, so do those around me, and some are called home by God. Their death is honored because of their faith in the Lord and his delight in receiving them into their eternal home. You see, no one lives or dies outside of God's will. From the very first words written by the psalmist, I knew I would appreciate this Psalm. He writes, "I love the Lord..." (V1), and then he shares why. It seems that the psalmist had faced a near-death experience by what he writes in verses 3, 6, 8, and 15. The finality of life causes the writer to share some deep and meaningful statements like, "Because he bends down to listen..." (V2) "How kind the Lord is! How good he is." (V5) "I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving..." (V17) The psalmist expresses his commitment to live as God's servant and resolves to honor him publicly. The question that still rings true for me is, "What can I offer the Lord for all he has done for me?" (V12). How would you answer that question? What verse or verses caught your eye? Why?

DAY 11 – Psalm 117 & 118

I think Ps 117 has a valuable message even though it is very short. The Apostle Paul quotes this verse in Romans 15:11, pointing to the inclusion of the Gentiles as they would enjoy the new covenant along with Jews, found in the salvation offered through Jesus. Psalm 118 is a longer psalm, of course, emphasizing the importance of thanksgiving. It begins that way in verse 1 and affirms the message of thanksgiving again in verse 19, and also ends with giving thanks. This Psalm has a poetic ring to it. Sometimes the words are repeated, and other times there is a

smooth flow that seems intentional, like a poem. Of course, there are a number of identifiable statements that we notice. "His love endures forever" is repeated, as is "take refuge in the Lord." Several of the verses are also quoted in the New Testament like "The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone." (V22) "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord..." (V26) Plus, a verse turned into a song jumps off the page for me, "This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it." (V24) Does verse 28 resonate in your heart like it does mine? "You are my God, and I will praise you! You are my God, and I will exalt you!" How has this Psalm spoken to you? How might you give thanks to the Lord?

WEEK 3

Guess what? We are only going to read one chapter in the Bible this week, but, of course, it is the longest chapter in the Bible. I have not spent a lot of time in Psalm 119, so I am glad to dedicate a whole week to discovery. I always thought this was a Psalm of David, but we don't actually know who wrote it and there might be more than one author. There are 22 sections, each beginning with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The words most repeated in the chapter are instructions, laws, words, regulations, statutes, commands, decrees, commandments, and promises. The theme of the chapter points to a deep commitment to the Lord and his instructions. I hope you are looking forward to this week in Psalm 119 as much as I am.

DAY 12 – Psalm 119:1-24

The first section is identified as “Aleph” with the word “blessed” in English, which continues for all of the first 8 verses using a word in Hebrew that has the first letter as “Aleph.” The next 8 verses begin with “Beth,” which is also the first letter in each word that begins every sentence in verses 9 to 16. Do you see what I am saying? For example: “**A**ll those whose way is blameless are blessed, who walk in the law of Lord. **A**pproved are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart: **A**nyone who does no wrong, but walks in his ways. **A**nd you command your precepts to be kept carefully. **A**h, that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! **A**mong my detractors I will stand, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. **A**ccclaiming you with an upright heart, I learn your righteous ordinances. **A**s I keep your statutes, do not utterly forsake me.” I thought giving you an example like this might help you understand what a Hebrew reader would easily recognize in this Psalm, which does not naturally correspond to an English translation. So, English translations do not even try to match each sentence with the same letter. These 24 verses in our reading today are all valuable, but I have found that focusing on one or two of them gives me the best chance to remember what is written and to apply it to my life. “I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” (V11) The emphasis on the Word of God is a predominant theme in the whole Psalm. There are many statements in Psalm 119 that will help me to live with integrity and not sin against God. I want to pay attention to those. Like verse 21, which is instructional: “You rebuke the arrogant; those who wander from your commands are cursed.” Pride is mentioned in Proverbs several times, and the Bible as a whole says God opposes the proud. “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God and he will lift up in due time.”

DAY 13 – Psalm 119:25-48

Each section is meant to have a theme, but the whole of Psalm 119 is repetitive as we read about God's law, his commands, the importance of the Word, and the psalmist's desire to obey the Lord. Verse 30 is a clear example of the writer's primary concern: "I have chosen to be faithful; I have determined to live by your regulations." Some of the statements seem especially relevant, like "Give me an eagerness for your laws rather than a love for money!" (V36). Verse 45 grabs my attention as it essentially says true freedom is found in obedience: "I will walk in freedom, for I have devoted myself to your commandments." Does verse 47 reflect your heart? "How I delight in your commands! How I love them!" As I have suggested, please pick a verse or two and fix your thoughts on what it is saying and meditate on the truth of its message so that it might fill your heart.

DAY 14 – Psalm 119:49-72

As I read the next three sections, I kept on thinking of Psalm 19 and verse 10, "They (your laws) are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb." Just like verse 72 concludes our reading today with "Your instructions are more valuable to me than millions in gold and silver." The word "meditate" is used in verse 52, which really fits with what is being said time and again. "I meditate on your age-old regulations (The Torah) ..." No matter what the surrounding evil doers are up to, "I am firmly anchored to your instructions." (V61) Verse 71 presents a Biblical principle that is woven throughout God's Word, "My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees." Hebrews 12:7 says, "Endure hardship as discipline from the Lord." I think it is fascinating to examine these verses from Psalm 119 and notice how they express truth and counsel from God that is evident throughout the Bible. Which principle are you noticing in this section?

DAY 15 – Psalm 119:73-96

As I read these verses, I couldn't help but notice the heaviness of the middle section. It seemed unique to the posture of what we have been reading in Psalm 119. But I wondered when the psalmist might express remorse and weariness? "I am worn out waiting for your rescue..." (V81). Words like "straining," "shriveled," "forgotten," "deep pits," "finished me off," and "spare my life" get my attention. I am quite sure that we all feel like that sometimes. Verses 81 to 88 seem realistic to me. It makes the eagerness of the psalmist more real because his life is far from perfect. But the next section redirects us to the Lord's true identity as faithful, the One who rescues. "I am yours..." (V94) says the psalmist to the Lord. Oftentimes, David would write with deep honesty and travail about his circumstances and yet would close with assurance of God's unfailing love, like Psalm 13. So too, "Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created." (V90) My closing thoughts are riveted on verse 77, "Surround me with your tender mercies so I may live, for your instructions are my delight." Which verse might you reread and maybe even memorize?

DAY 16 – Psalm 119:97-120

This section begins with the deep devotion of the writer as an example for us to follow. Human teachers pale in comparison to the wisdom of God found in his commands and precepts. But this all leads up to the most familiar verse for me in the whole Psalm, “Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.” (V105) The reason this verse is so recognizable for me comes from Amy Grant’s song with the same words. This was a popular Christian song when I first met Christ. Verse 111 says something that summarizes the theme in this section, “Your laws are my treasure; they are my heart’s desire.” Also, the psalmist declares his hatred for evil and his love for God and his ways. More than anything, I read about devotion and commitment to God and his truth from our reading today. What do you notice? I am repeating the prayer from verse 114 this morning to the Lord, “You are my refuge and my shield; your word is my source of hope.” I know that Psalm 119 tends to repeat the same ideas, which essentially point to their importance. Repetition in the Bible is purposeful. Each day as you read these verses, read slowly, giving special attention to whatever might stir your heart. These are words of devotion and fit very well with a prayerful connection to our God.

DAY 17 – Psalm 119:121-144

Won’t people notice when you protect me and bless me, Lord? Won’t that get their attention and cause them to realize their folly? The opposition of evil, arrogant people is in the shadows of the psalmist’s life. He longs for God’s rescue (V123) and for God to bless his obedience. “Lord, it is time for you to act, for these evil people have violated your instructions.” (V126) Psalm 119 does not make judgment for evil and folly a primary topic, but it does not avoid it either. A righteous God cannot overlook the disobedience of people who oppress others. But the main focus is not on punishment for evil but on deliverance and freedom: “Ransom me from the oppression of evil people; then I can obey your commandments.” (V134) The psalmist is especially heavy-hearted for the callousness of those who ignore God. “Rivers of tears gush from my eyes because people disobey your instruction.” What I am noticing is the sadness in the psalmist concerning people who live in unbelief rather than anger against those who lack faith. That is an interesting insight for me because thinking of lost people with a sense of sadness and deep concern seems more in line with the heart of God than pointing a judgmental finger at lost people. As I read and contemplated the focus of these verses, I found the psalmist’s response to the spiritual needs of lost people more compassionate than judgmental.

DAY 18 – Psalm 119:145-176

As we complete the week in the longest chapter of the Bible, I needed to include four Hebrew letters to do so. The psalmist pursues the Lord early in the morning and late into the night. Time and again, the author presses forward despite the challenge of those against him. I can easily let the problems of life distract my devotion. Stress, illness, disappointments, etc., can weigh heavily on me, but the psalmist keeps his focus: “Powerful people harness me without cause, but my heart trembles only at your word.” (V161) Obviously, my strongest takeaway from this Psalm is the relentless pursuit of God and his word no matter what happens. Time and again, we read about the need for God’s help to stay on track. I think that is absolutely correct. I

wander like a sheep and need the Lord to direct me back. (V178) How are you responding to our week-long journey through Psalm 119?

WEEK 4

This week we begin reading Psalms known as songs for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem for the three main festivals of the year. These songs take the reader on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to praise God for his goodness to Israel, both present blessings and how God has blessed them in the past. These short Psalms will enable us to slow down and enter into genuine praise to our God for his help and protection.

DAY 19 – Psalm 120

This first reading for the week may surprise you, but obviously the psalmist is troubled by the corruption around him. He is living as a stranger among hateful liars. The idea is that the pilgrim has set out for Jerusalem looking forward to the peace of God's presence available upon arrival with those who trust God. Most of the Psalm depicts his lament as he lives in a foreign land where people speak of war rather than peace. Have you ever felt like a minority as a believer? Maybe you felt that way in your family or workplace or in the community. Then, the gathering of God's people can be so refreshing and something you look forward to in the middle of the week when tension and injustice make you weary. Fellowship with other believers is essential to remaining strong in a lost world. Do you carve out time to be with other believers?

DAY 20 – Psalm 121

Why is this Psalm one of our favorites? I read this Psalm to people in the hospital, assuring them that God is watching over them and knows exactly what they are going through. We might hear of people crying out to the sky as if to say, "God, if you are there, help me." Verse 1 & 2 are a comparison. It is essentially saying that God is personal (V2), not just a force of nature (V1), as if to cry out to mountains for help. And the Lord is a 24/7 God, who is always there and continuously available. Don't you love the fact that the Almighty God is protecting you?! You can probably think of several situations when God protected you. In fact, I am sure you realize that God protected you more times than you can even count. Plus, God promises to watch over us and be our shade in times of trouble, right up until we breathe our last breath. Do you believe that? How does this Psalm speak to you?

DAY 21 – Psalm 122

I remember the church I attended for several years would always recite verse 1 of this Psalm Sunday after Sunday. "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" It

is an encouraging thought and similar to the idea of “entering his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.” (Psalm 100:4) Jerusalem is a magnificent city. I loved visiting Jerusalem in 2016. This clearly presents God’s people on a pilgrimage as they joyfully arrive at the city, the city of God. Jerusalem is seen as a metaphor for God’s heavenly dwelling. I can even think of the New Jerusalem as described in Revelation 21. This Psalm elevates the significance of Jerusalem in so many ways. It is a city of safety, of worship, of peace, of wisdom and justice, the place of sacrifices and prophecy. Yes, biblical prophecy points to Jerusalem as the culmination of history. And it represents the hope we have of Christ reigning over all the world from this City of God. Why do you think Jerusalem is so important? How might you display an enthusiasm for entering New Harvest on a Sunday morning to worship and to be with God’s people?

DAY 22 – Psalm 123

I know this Psalm is very brief, and I might have suggested reading the next Psalm also, but they really don’t go together. The theme of this Psalm reminds us to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord who is enthroned in heaven. Verse 2 seems like the focal point of this short Psalm: “We keep looking to the Lord our God for his mercy.” The ESV translation emphasizes “until we receive mercy.” Then, verse 3 says essentially the same thing, “Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.” The world and evil doers are close by, so the psalmist asks for God’s mercy that he might not be brought down. It reminds me of a prayer known as the “Jesus Prayer.” “Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, a sinner.” People have often prayed this prayer throughout the day during times of brokenness and need. In fact, I have found praying the Jesus Prayer helpful and transformational. As we fix our eyes on the Lord and ask him for mercy, his presence can be felt if we (you) are patient enough to wait on him. In this way, a 4-verse psalm is just right. Don’t be in a hurry as you anticipate his closeness and even listen for the whisper of God!

DAY 23 – Psalm 124

This Psalm begs us to consider what might have happened if the Lord were not on our side. Isn’t that an interesting idea to contemplate? Obviously, the specific thought shared describes what might have happened if the Lord were not present with his people. The negative possibilities fade away as we realize the help of God who made heaven and earth (v. 8). The Apostle Paul said, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rm 8:31). In those same verses, Paul says we are “more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Can you think of something in your life that could have easily gone wrong if it weren’t for the presence and protection of God? As the people are making their way to Jerusalem, they are praising God for how he has taken care of them during the toughest of times. They are a people headed to celebrate God’s goodness

because they have experienced it firsthand. How might you praise the Lord for his rescue in your lifetime and again?!

DAY 24 – Psalm 125

Protection and peace are highlighted in this Psalm as well. Yesterday's reading could be coupled with what we read today. God's protection is a worthy topic to repeat and contemplate. Jesus prayed protection for his disciples in John 17, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." (v. 17) I often think of this prayer regarding my life, my family, and our church family. Verse 2 reminds me of Elisha and his servant as the enemy armies of Aram were headed to execute Elisha because he kept on warning the King of Israel about what the King of Aram planned to do. In 2 Kings 6:16-17, Elisha asked the Lord to open the eyes of his servant, revealing an angelic force on the hillside protecting them. The Aramean army was struck blind by the Lord as God protected Elisha and the city. (6:8-23) So, the Psalm says choose who you will follow, "O Lord, do good to those who are good, whose hearts are in tune with you." The godly might be tempted to follow the ungodly, but as they trust in the Lord, he will bless them. These short Psalms in our Bible reading this week are meant to slow us down with prayer and to meditate on God's goodness as we anticipate being with other believers in the house of God, praising him together.

WEEK 5

We continue our journey through these shorter Psalms utilized during the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the three main festivals for the Jews: Passover, Pentecost, and Sukkot, which is known as the Festival of Booths. In our readings this week, you will notice two psalms in a row (127 & 128) that focus on the family. Family life is important to God and highlighted in these two readings. I have found Psalm 131, as short as it is (3 verses), to be especially illuminating. We are slowing down to absorb God's message to us through these psalms.

DAY 25 – Psalm 126

The timing of this Psalm is clearly after the Jews returned to Jerusalem post-captivity in Babylon. The joy and celebration was indeed exciting. "What amazing things the Lord has done for them." (V2) But there was so much still left to do. Rescue is marvelous, but restoration takes some time. I think of salvation this way. It is wonderful to be saved by Jesus and have our sins forgiven. But the process of renewal and transformation is ongoing, of course. Sometimes people seem satisfied with being saved but have little interest in watering the seeds of faith so that they might grow (spiritually). "They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest." (v. 6) Since you are reading God's Word through this "reading schedule," I am confident that you desire to grow in your relationship with Christ. The writer of Hebrews was very concerned about the progress of believers. He wrote. "You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food." (Hebrews 5:12) May that never be said of us. Like the prayer of the psalmist, "restore our fortunes, Lord," as we pursue you!

DAY 26 – Psalm 127 & 128

I have always thought of these Psalms going together. They say so much about the home and family life in a few verses. It begins with the Lord building the house, which is really a home. (127:1) Verses 3 to 5 highlight the blessing of children. Psalm 128 essentially says the same thing in verse 3 about the gift of a wife and the vibrancy of children in the home. Plus, Psalm 128:6 affirms grandchildren as a blessing as well. Right now, I am reading a story about the Amish, and even though it is fiction, the emphasis on family and loyalty is very strong. The resiliency of the Amish community is based on family togetherness and community loyalty. It is surprising that such a unique Christian community can exist in a modern world like ours. It actually impresses me. The Bible does not say a lot about parenting or family dynamics, but you read words like these, and you know that the Lord meant to bless us with family. The healthy

family will further God's plan as children grow up in a godly home. This is clearly the theme of these two Psalms. What do you notice that caught your eye? What does this say to you about family life?

DAY 27 – Psalm 129

It is helpful to remember that the people are remembering their past as they are on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the blessing of knowing God through one of the festivals. Life has been difficult for God's people, and they have the "marks" to show it. Time and again the Lord has rescued his people. "But the Lord is good; he has cut me free from the ropes of the ungodly." (v. 4) The psalmist is recalling Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon as enemies who forced punishment and captivity for the Jews. The enemies who had sown such hurt on God's people would wither like grass with no moisture and shallow roots. But the blessing of God would rest on his people because of the assurance of God's name, who is strong and faithful to defend his people. How has God blessed you?

DAY 28 – Psalm 130

This is one of my favorites in this section of Psalms. In a way, this is the message of the Gospel, don't you think? The psalmist is praying for mercy in verse 2. He is looking up to the Lord for help as his sins have caused him to fall in a hole, so to speak. No one can stand on their own merit. In Romans 3, we read that no one is righteous, not even one. "If you kept a record of sins, who could survive?" (v. 3) The wording in the NIV for verses 5 & 6 uses the word "wait" 5 times. Sometimes that word is translated "hope." How do waiting and hoping mean the same thing; how are they different? God's people put their hope in the Lord (v. 7), which could have been as easily translated "confidence," because that is the meaning in this verse. Believers are confident in the Lord's unfailing love so they can wait for his forgiveness and redemption, knowing the Lord loves to forgive us as we turn to him. How does this Psalm inspire you?

DAY 29 – Psalm 131

Of course, this is such a short Psalm, but I prefer to only focus on these three verses today. This is a subject I have been contemplating as much as any recently. I long for the "unhurried life" matched by the "unhurried soul." I am quite sure this topic did not come naturally for David, who is the writer of this Psalm. Each line in this Psalm gets my attention. It begins with humility, or it doesn't begin at all. David has not let the complexity of life get in the way of the simplicity of connection with God. "I don't concern myself with matters too great..." (v. 1). Instead, I intentionally calm and quiet myself. (V2) The idea behind a weaned child is the gift of

contentment. The principle of simplicity and rest is affirmed in Isaiah 30:15-22, a key Old Testament reading that caught my attention along with a favorite invitation from Jesus to the people in Matthew 11:28-30. For me, “calm” means to slow down, and “quiet” challenges me to listen. Both are necessary for me to hear the whisper of God and enjoy his rest. How do you respond to this topic? What might it look like for you to calm and quiet yourself?

DAY 30 – Psalm 132

This seems more like a historical account of God’s activity and David’s life than a hymn of praise. It was interesting to read because you can sense the esteem that people had for David. When I was in Jerusalem, we visited David’s casket, which is enshrined underneath part of the Temple’s structure. It was a place of prayer, for sure. There was a reverence in the posture and faces of the Orthodox Jews present. Most likely our Psalm was written around four hundred years after the life of David. Some of these words highlight the time when David moved the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. This clearly made Jerusalem a special place, even thought of as God’s home. Verse 14, “This is my resting place forever,” he said. “I will live here, for this is the home I desired.” There’s no doubt in my mind that Jerusalem continues to be a special place to God. What about David, and what about Jerusalem that seems especially significant to the psalmist? What stands out to you?

WEEK 6

These next two psalms will wrap up our focus on songs for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. Then we will remember Psalm 136 because it is easily identified as a recited psalm with the consistent response of “His faithful love endures forever.” As always, I am sure the Lord will surprise us with inspiration and insights for our journey as Christians.

DAY 31 – Psalm 133

This is another short Psalm that I appreciate so much. The theme of togetherness, connection, and harmony is so important to the Lord. We also understand that our journey is never to be taken alone. We are invited to community with others walking alongside in faith. As I think of this theme, I am drawn to what the Lord prayed in John 17, verses 20-26. Being one in spirit and walking in unity are essential to the mission we are on. Jesus also said, “Love each other: just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” (John 13:34-35) You can see how significant love and unity are to the Lord. It is one of the most compelling reasons why people will be drawn to Christ when Christians love each other deeply. The message of this Psalm promises blessing when there is harmony. Anointing of oil and the dew of Hermon represent divine blessings. The blessings point to God’s provision, protection, and his presence. Plus, the promise of eternal life is not just a New Testament concept. It is outlined for us in the New Testament through Jesus Christ, but this closing sentence gives us hope for eternal life because that is what God intended for human beings.

DAY 32 – Psalm 134

You might have anticipated us reading both Psalm 133 & 134 together, but they have nothing in common except that they might be sung on the way to Jerusalem. I like slowing down for these short psalms and thinking more deeply about their meaning. There’s nothing especially profound in this Psalm except that those who serve in the Temple would be examples of praise and worship. He is most likely referring to priests and Levites. I think of the role of those who lead us in worship on Sundays. As they worship, we are carried along with them. Sometimes those who serve in the Temple might lose a sense of awe because they handle holy things every day. If those who serve God, like pastors, leaders, and teachers, lose their zeal for God, it will dampen the enthusiasm of those they lead. A vibrant pastor, church leader, or anyone who serves the Body of Christ is crucial to the overall spiritual vibrancy of God’s people, his community. Your example can rub off on others, for good and for bad. Do you believe this? How might you be an example of genuine worship?

DAY 33 – Psalm 135

Technically, this is not a psalm included in the songs of ascent. But to me, it seems very similar to what we have been reading. The whole Psalm elevates the greatness of God (v. 5) and uses the example of the Exodus to affirm his power to do the impossible. The confrontation about idols is a valid one since the surrounding people worshiped idols and many gods. The idols are nothing according to the psalmist, and God is everything, worthy of praise. God is creator, deliverer, alive, and worthy of wholehearted praise. I think it is interesting for me to realize that I resonated with Psalm 133 & 134 more so because I could focus and meditate on the deep truth of these Psalms and found that the message of Ps 135 wasn't as impactful to me mostly because it was so much longer. How are you responding to this Psalm? What reasons are there to praise the Lord in this Psalm and in your life?

DAY 34 – Psalm 136

I had read that the songs of ascent were 120 to 134, but another scholar suggests that it should be 120 to 136, and I agree. I can easily visualize the people making their way to Jerusalem with these repetitive words, "His love endures forever," on their lips. The worship leader could announce the works of God, and the people could repeat after each statement these words. I think it seems especially inspiring to have hundreds of people shouting "his love endures forever" as they ascend to the holy city. Previously, I didn't think about this Psalm very much, but in recent years I have seen the meaning behind it and the significance of gratitude throughout the Psalm. This Great God is the creator of all; he rescues, delivers, and saves his people; he provides a home, protection, and provision every step of the way; he has personally helped each one of us in so many ways. Do you notice this type of emphasis in the Psalm? I have spent time rewriting this Psalm in my own words. How do I appreciate the creation of God? In what ways has he delivered me from sin and shame? How has the Lord protected my loved ones and me? What is he doing right now to show his steadfast love to me? It has become a very special and meaningful Psalm to me. How might you respond to the words of this Psalm personally? How does this lead to thanksgiving?

DAY 35 – Psalm 137

This Psalm is not only a lament but also a prayer for vengeance because of the cruelty and torment from Israel's captors. It was difficult for the exiled people to remember the good days of worship in Jerusalem. It was unthinkable for them to sing the songs of celebration and joy they once sang in praise. The Babylonians seemed to ridicule the Jews by forcing them to sing

and dance as a show. But this was so distasteful to God's people. The people in exile asked for God's divine justice to bring destruction on their enemies. We must realize that these pagan people were wicked, corrupt, and thoroughly committed to evil. They lived in opposition to God and to everything that God does. The wicked were uprooting the foundations of God's kingdom, both ethically and morally. They would do all they could to strip God's people of their resolve to honor God. If the people of God were eliminated, God's plan to rescue the world through the Messiah would be desecrated into nothing. But these kinds of prayers are released to God for his doing and his timing. Prayers for justice and vindication are given to the Lord for his retribution. The Bible clearly teaches that vengeance is the Lord's prerogative. Read Romans 12:17-21 as a reminder of the importance of this principle.

DAY 36 – Psalm 138

What a contrast from yesterday with David's overflowing praise and appreciation to God. I enjoy praying this specific prayer to God, using David's words with personal meaning and devotion for me. What particular phrase or sentence do you connect with? Previously, I have pointed to this Psalm as a great way to thank the Lord for his goodness, especially near Thanksgiving in November. The verse I am focusing on is verse 6 in the NIV, "Though the Lord is exalted (high above any person or planet), he looks kindly on the lowly (humble), though lofty, he sees them from afar." God is so big, but that does not diminish his kindness to us. David affirms the Lord's caring ways as he has personally experienced God's protection and power to rescue. (V7) Isn't it a marvelous truth that God cares about us?! "Humble yourselves, therefore (because he shows favor to the humble), under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety (cares) on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:6-7) I encourage you to pray this Psalm in a way that makes it your words and not just David's words.

WEEK 7

This upcoming week of readings is exceptional, in my opinion. These are all written by David and have a depth that stirs my heart for the Lord. This first reading is probably your favorite as we recite the words, “fearfully and wonderfully made.” Initially, I thought of these psalms as later writings by David, but Psalm 142 suggests he is hiding in a cave, which would have happened while he was fleeing King Saul. David was a young adult in his 20’s at that time. We know the approximate timing since David will be appointed King at age 30 in 2 Samuel 2-4. Enjoy a rich week of worship and prayer through David's words.

DAY 37 – Psalm 139

It is hard to write notes on this Psalm because it is so monumental, in my opinion. I am quite sure that books have been written on this one Psalm, and that there have been sermon series lasting 10 weeks or more. Where should I begin? Let’s start with an outline stating that God is omniscient (verses 1-6), omnipresent (verses 7-12), and omnipotent (verses 13-18). You can see how thorough and extensive the message of this Psalm is. Along with these illuminating topics, we have an especially deep prayer in verses 23-24, right? The psalmist tells us that God knows everything, and then he asks God to exercise his divine ability and look on the inside of our hearts. The Hebrew word for heart seldom refers to that which beats in your chest. Rather, the heart is the center of one’s being, an image of a person’s thought life, reflections, and will. The story of the heart reveals a person’s commitment and direction in life. I mention this because this Psalm begins and ends with the heart's significance. Verse 1 says, “O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.” As I already noted, verse 23 essentially says the same thing as this prayer. “Search me, O God, and know my heart.” How do you respond to the truth that God knows your heart and everything else as well? What stands out to you in this marvelous Psalm of wisdom, theology, and personal devotion?

DAY 38 – Psalm 140

As I was reading this Psalm, it reminded me of Jesus’ prayer for his disciples, “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” (John 17:15) The words of the psalmist are rescue, protect, keep safe, and then the word “protect” again in verse 4. There is evil in our world, no doubt about it. David recognizes the prevalence of evil and violence. We feel that as well, so this gives us an example of pleading with God for protection and rescue. David reminds God that he has done it before; please do it again (v. 7). Verse 10 asks for judgment from God, which points to the fires of hell. David wants them thrown into “pits” so they can never attack again. Hell is sometimes referred to as the “pit of hell.” In Luke

12:4-5, Jesus teaches his disciples that they should never be afraid of enemies who can only take away their life on earth. Instead, they should fear God, who can give eternal punishment. In the end, David is confident in God, Adoni, who brings justice, and he will end up praising the Lord again.

DAY 39 – Psalm 141

Right away I noticed David's expression of praying as incense in verse 2. I am thoughtful about that, since I read something similar in Revelation 8: the prayers of the saints rising like incense to the Lord. We also read about hands raised in praise to the Lord in verse 2b. Prayer and worship are better than incense or a sacrificial offering. David also wants God's protection and guidance regarding sin and evil. The wise person opens themselves to God's correction. As humans, we are prone to wander. If only the wicked were removed, David would be stronger and more likely to follow God's path. Sin in this world can lure us away, and the Bible tells us that the devil wants to do the same: "The devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray..." Revelation 12:9. This is the devil's mission, and he uses the corruption of this world to tempt, distract, and weaken the people of God. David's honesty about his vulnerability to sin stands out to me. He wants to please God and realizes that the ungodly want the opposite for him. However, he is grateful for the godly and their correction: "Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they correct me, it is soothing medicine. Don't let me refuse it." (v. 5) We need each other to follow the path that God has for us. How have other believers helped you stay strong and follow God's ways?

DAY 40 – Psalm 142

Unique to this Psalm, it provides context for David's writings. He is in "the cave," which brings us back to the time when King Saul was chasing him in order to kill him. As we read this Psalm, it is easy to connect it with the time of David's hiding, like in 1 Samuel 22 & 24, which tell us that David and his men were hiding in a cave. He is not alone but obviously outnumbered by Saul's army. David is praying to the Lord because he truly believes that God is on his side and will protect him even though the odds are against him. It might be hard for us to identify with David as he is running for his life. But I think that could be even more comforting, as David's situation is far more intense than ours, and yet God brought him through it. I bet you have felt like David as in verse 6, "Hear my cry, for I am very low. Rescue me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me." In other words, David believed that they were not too strong for the Lord. This kind of faith is very pleasing to God. We can take comfort in knowing that God is on our side and is big enough for any challenge we face. Amen!?

DAY 41 – Psalm 143

I know when I haven't read a psalm very often, there are no personal notes in my Bible next to the script. The only thing I did in this Psalm was underline the last phrase, "for I am your servant." I think that is a pretty good statement to underline. Don't you agree? I am contemplating when David might have written this Psalm. No one is very sure of the timing. Because the previous Psalm was earlier, I might guess that it was written as the Lord was shaping David's heart, especially in his early days. I notice the first phrase in the Psalm right away, "Listen to my cry for mercy." (NIV) There is a sense that David understands the opposition and the difficulty in his life as resulting from some sin or disobedience on his part. He then acknowledges the fact that no one is righteous before the Lord, and that includes him (v. 2). Ref. Romans 3:20-24. David is in a dark place as he writes these words. "I am paralyzed by fear." (v. 4) This leads to his desperation for God to intervene, "Come quickly, Lord, and answer me, for my depression deepens." (v. 7) From verses 7 to 12, I read words that fit my heart and have inspired my prayers today. For example, "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God." (v. 10) I can pray that with all sincerity. The next phrase is just as good: "May your gracious Spirit lead me forward on a firm footing." Amen to that! David turns to the Lord first and foremost in praise, and right along with that, during overwhelming circumstances. What a great example for us because David pleased the Lord in his generation.

DAY 42 – Psalm 144

To me, this is the prayer of a King. Verse 10 highlights this strong emphasis with "For you grant victory to kings! You rescued your servant David from the fatal sword." The Lord is his rock; the Lord is faithful and righteous; my fortress, shield, and tower. This is how David begins and leads to his pleas for God to use these qualities to secure victory. Verses 12 to 15 sound like the heart of a godly King who wants the best for his people. God's provision and protection are his prayer for himself but even more so for his descendants. The descriptive words of David in these final verses include "flourish, graceful, beauty, filled, multiply, produce, and joy," making this a prayer for blessing over the people then and for those who would follow. As you read through this Psalm, is there anything that stands out to you? How so? If there are people in your life you care for, this prayer of blessing could be lifted up on their behalf. Blessing others is definitely an important theme in the Bible. How might you bless those closest to you?

WEEK 8

This week will complete our journey through the last book of Psalms. These final Psalms are sure to inspire us again. Some of my favorite verses are found here, like, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” (150:6). These weeks in Psalms have heightened my worship and filled my prayers. I hope you will return to Psalms again and again for inspiration and direction for prayer and worship.

DAY 43 – Psalm 145

David writes a Psalm of praise by utilizing the alphabet. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, which almost matches the 21 verses we have read for today. Verse 13 is what throws off the sequence because two Hebrew letters make up this verse. I really like verse 13 also, “For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule throughout all generations. The Lord always keeps his promises; he is gracious in all he does.” Actually, this whole Psalm is full of words that match my heart and lead to praise for me. Is that true for you? How so? In verse 4, it affirms the importance of each generation proclaiming the deeds of the Lord and carrying on his mission. I take that to heart. The adoration in this Psalm is strong and heartfelt through David. This is the last Psalm attributed to him. After today, we will read more Psalms of praise, but the authors of 146 to 150 are unknown. I am contemplating verse 18, “The Lord is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth.” In the New Testament, I often quote James when he wrote, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.” (James 4:8) Those words are motivational to me as I take the first step. I know the Lord is the initiator, or I wouldn’t even think of stepping toward him. But I have found that when I sincerely pursue him, he shows up for me. This Psalm has many statements that, when offered in sincerity, are a delight to God and a pleasure to share. How has this Psalm spoken to you; how has it impressed you?

DAY 44 – Psalm 146

Right from the “get go” this Psalm impresses me with verse 2, “I will praise the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath.” Along with that statement is the next, which reminds us not to trust in powerful people or human leaders. They are here today and gone tomorrow. But those who trust in the Lord will be full of joy and hope. I like that outcome so much better. Verse 6 to 9 covers so much ground. They tell us so much about God and who he is and what he does. Which statement in these four verses touches your heart? “The Lord lifts up those who are weighed down.” (v. 8) Jesus invited the weighed down and those carrying heavy burdens to come to him. He offers rest and relief in Matthew 11:28-30. The Lord heals, protects, unburdens, and loves in verses 8 & 9. He does great things like creating the world and

he does tender things like caring for orphans and widows. God is amazingly strong and wonderfully soft at the same time. God is strong and soft and everything in between. We are blessed when we place our hope in the Lord. Isaiah 40:31 promises that those who hope in the Lord will soar on wings like eagles. I find this Psalm very uplifting, just like yesterday's reading. How do you respond to these words?

DAY 45 – Psalm 147

This reading reminds me of yesterday's Psalm in that God is so great and yet so gracious at the same time. Also, today's Psalm must have been written around the return of the exiles, which is approximately 500 BC. "The Lord is rebuilding Jerusalem..." (V.2). I have always appreciated the message and emphasis of this Psalm. My Bible is filled with personal notes throughout these verses. I recognize the many reasons to praise the Lord. Verses 3 & 4 display a noticeable contrast from God's concern for the brokenhearted versus his governance over the stars in the heavens. Some of these words remind me of Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it..." But nothing seems more compelling and convicting than verse 10, "He takes no pleasure in the strength of the horse or in human might." Human achievement fails to impress the Lord. To me, this says that any physical or intellectual achievement is a gift from the Lord, which means my only response to the Lord and his goodness would be thankfulness and humility. The focus of verses 13 & 14 is rich with safety, prosperity, peace, and satisfaction! I am sure you have found a verse or two to camp on for reflection, appreciation, and prayer. How so?

DAY 46 – Psalm 148

These final three psalms bring a crescendo of praise that our God completely deserves. The first word in many of these verses is "praise," which will occur again in Psalm 150. The psalmist begins with a call to the whole creation to praise the Lord. "Let every created thing give praise to the Lord." (v. 5) As we observe the beauty of creation and the work of God's hand, the only proper response is praise. I notice that my wife is quicker to appreciate something in the created order that reflects the power and presence of God. The average hummingbird, for example, beats its wings 80 times a second. Fascinating to watch as they drink at our feeder in the backyard. The Psalm concludes with the people of God recognizing the greatness and glory of God (v. 13), which ignites our worship and praise. I think the simplicity and inspiration of the doxology hymn point to what we read in this Psalm. "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise Him, all creatures here below; praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!" How does this Psalm inspire your praise?

DAY 47 – Psalm 149

This Psalm obviously elevates the greatness of God. He is the Creator, the King, and the Victor. I notice the “new song” and always appreciate that the Lord is doing new things, and we respond with a new song. Worship is highlighted with singing, music, dancing, and praise. There is assurance that the Lord will make all things right; his justice will prevail. He will execute vengeance, bind up kings, punish evil doers, and carry out judgment. Verse 3 tells us about the tambourine and the harp. But in other places within the Scriptures, musical instruments are mentioned like the trumpet, flute, cymbals, and the ram’s horn, known as the shofar. (See Psalm 150:3-5, which will be our reading for tomorrow.) Music has been a characteristic of worship and celebration for God’s people since Genesis. The phrase that stood out to me is “for the Lord delights in his people.” (v. 4) The jubilant praise of God’s people is a delight to the Lord. I want to please God, and genuine worship is a sweet aroma to the Lord. The Apostle Paul wrote, “We make it our aim to please the Lord...” (2 Corinthians 5:9). One day we will reign with the Lord and execute judgment alongside our Savior and King, Jesus Christ. This is the vision and assurance in verses 6 to 9 for those who honor the Lord.

DAY 48 – Psalm 150

This brief but powerful Psalm is a fitting way to wrap up the Book of Psalms. We can praise God in the assembly but also in the open air as we appreciate God’s creation. We can praise him for his greatness, but as we have learned previously, we can praise him for his kindness. There’s no need to withhold one’s gratitude and praise, for we are invited to praise God with energy and enthusiasm because he is worthy. Verse 6 will close the Book so well: “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” AMEN!