



Praying the Psalms

The Lenten season is a time of deep spiritual reflection as we journey with Jesus to the cross and beyond. The Psalms are a special book in the Bible that are prayers. Some give praise; others are deep cries of lament. Our prayers are meant to share the gamut of our humanity.

This year has been particularly hard on the world. The Psalms are meant to give voice to our experience and share the fully with the Lord.

Here is a guided reading to read and pray the Psalms.

Wednesday 2/17 - Day 1
Read Psalm 51:1-17

Thursday 2/18 - Day 2
Read Psalm 37

Friday 2/19 - Day 3
Read Psalm 31

Saturday 2/20 - Day 4
Read Psalm 32

Monday 2/22 - Day 5
Read Psalm 52

Tuesday 2/23 - Day 6
Read Psalm 48

Wednesday 2/24 - Day 7
Read Psalm 119:49-72

Thursday 2/25 - Day 8
Read Psalm 50

Friday 2/26 - Day 9
Read Psalm 51

Saturday 2/27 - Day 10
Read Psalm 139:1-17

Monday 3/1 - Day 11
Read Psalm 56

Tuesday 3/2 - Day 12
Read Psalm 62

Wednesday 3/3 - Day 13
Read Psalm 72

Thursday 3/4 - Day 14
Read Psalm 71

Friday 3/5 - Day 15
Read Psalm 69

Saturday 3/6 - Day 16
Read Psalm 23

Monday 3/8 - Day 17
Read Psalm 77

Tuesday 3/9 - Day 18
Read Psalm 78

Wednesday 3/10 - Day 19
Read Psalm 119:97-120

Thursday 3/11 - Day 20
Read Psalm 42

Friday 3/12 - Day 21
Read Psalm 92

Saturday 3/13 - Day 22
Read Psalm 136

Monday 3/15 - Day 23
Read Psalm 89:1-18

Tuesday 3/16 - Day 24
Read Psalm 94

Wednesday 3/17 - Day 25
Read Psalm 101

Thursday 3/18 - Day 26
Read Psalm 73

Friday 3/19 - Day 27
Read Psalm 107:1-32

Saturday 3/20 - Day 28
Read Psalm 108:1-6

Monday 3/22 - Day 29
Read Psalm 35

Tuesday 3/23 - Day 30
Read Psalm 126

Wednesday 3/24 - Day 31
Read Psalm 119:145-176

Thursday 3/25 - Day 32
Read Psalm 131

Friday 3/26 - Day 33
Read Psalm 143:1-11

Saturday 3/27 - Day 34
Read Psalm 137

Monday 3/29 - Day 35
Read Psalm 36:5-11

Tuesday 3/30 - Day 36
Read Psalm 71:1-14

Wednesday 3/31 - Day 37
Read Psalm 70

Thursday 4/1 - Day 38
Read Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

Friday 4/2 - Day 39
Read Psalm 22

Saturday 4/3 - Day 40
Read Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16

Spending Lent in the Psalms - Daily Meditations

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Organization: Alliance for Christian Media

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Note: The psalm readings for Ash Wednesday and Holy Week are taken from the Revised Common Lectionary; otherwise the daily psalm readings are taken from the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer. Verses are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. These meditations are adapted from the author's daily devotional, Psalms for Today.

2/17 Ash Wednesday - Day 1

Read Psalm 51:1-17

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. -Psalm 51:10

Today we begin a journey of spiritual introspection. Our goal in carving out this time each day during the 40 days of Lent is to clean out our heart and open our spirit so that we may respond freely to God's call to live and serve in resurrection life.

We start with the psalm writer who expresses a devastated spirit caused by personal failure. Sin seemed to choke the very life out of him. Humbly the psalmist turns to God, confesses the sin, pleads for forgiveness, and seeks a fresh start. A clean slate. A faithful spirit. A renewed heart. A fresh start.

God can give the same to you today. You may be coming through a difficult time personally that has overwhelmed you with sadness, futility, or frustration, and you are aching for Easter. God will hear the cry of your hurting heart. And God will honor your desire to be cleansed.

If God could forgive and forget the psalmist's sin and renew a right relationship, then God can do the same with you-no matter what troubling blot darkens your heart. And if God can create the universe, then God can recreate your heart and spirit. A new and right spirit is yours for the asking.

Thursday 2/18 - Day 2

Read Psalm 37

Trust in the Lord, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. -Psalm 37:3,4

The psalmist invites you to journey with all the saints on this pathway of promise.

Trust in the Lord. Let your faith be the rock bottom of your life, solid and supporting, so that you know whatever happens, God is there.

Do good. Not to gain God's acceptance, but to live and serve in the joy of loving God. Be a positive force in the lives of those with whom you live and work and play.

Live in the land. It was God's gift to God's people, the land of promise and hope. Spiritually it is yours, too, if you will accept it and live in it.

Enjoy security. When you live in God's loving presence, you can know deeply that all is well and all will be well, even when it doesn't look like it.

Take delight in the Lord. Be aware of all the ways God provides for you. Recognize how God works in your life, how God blesses your heart, how God ministers through you. And enjoy it.

Make these the desires of your heart and God will fulfill them.

Friday 2/19 - Day 3**Read Psalm 31**

Love the Lord, all you his saints. The Lord preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord. -Psalm 31:23,24

Our relationship with God is a deep and unfathomable mystery. Just when we think we begin to understand it, it swallows us up in its abounding grace.

The psalmist invites God's faithful people to foster their love for God, to blow on the burning embers and cause them to flame up again. Why? Because God keeps us in God's embrace. God protects and preserves us from trouble. And God deserves our loving response.

Today you may not be feeling much love, toward God or anyone. Your resources may be dwindling because of the struggles and strains of life and work and relationships and faith.

Take courage. Let go of the bonds of worry and fear that encircle you, and draw strength. You can if you place your hope in God.

Hope builds courage. Courage builds strength. And it all comes from a loving God whom we'll never fully understand.

Saturday 2/20 - Day 4**Read Psalm 32**

You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. -Psalm 32:7

At one time or another, all of us reach the point where we just want to crawl into a hole and hide, to shut out the rest of the world from our lives.

We reach our limits with the stresses of life. We become weary over the hassles of dealing with difficult people. We're exhausted by dragging our various burdens around with us, some of which we've carried far too long but can't release. We just want it all to go away.

God understands. God's desire is to free us from those stresses, hassles, and burdens. And God is able to do just that.

Today, instead of crawling into a hole, put yourself under God's wings. Crawl into God's strong hands. Let God preserve you and surround you with the warmth of love and the joy of praise.

That's not escaping from your problems; it's being delivered from them. Hiding in God is in reality opening yourself to life in all its fullness.

Monday 2/22 - Day 5**Read Psalm 52**

But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever. -Psalm 52:8

A tree stands in the courtyard. Immovable. Unshakable. Its roots reach deep into the rich earth, drawing strength, support, and sustenance.

The psalmist likened himself to a large olive tree growing in the courtyard of the temple of God. He had been planted there and was now flourishing. He would not be moved, or cut down, or diseased. He drew health and

strength from his surroundings.

An olive tree is evergreen. Always alive, always growing, limbs spreading and greenery flourishing. That was how the psalmist pictured himself as a child of God. The question of his place in the world had been settled. He would trust in God's mercy forever and ever.

How much can you identify with that today? Or are you feeling more like tumbleweed, rootless and blown by the wind?

Trust in God. Settle down with God. Let your roots reach deep in God's soil. And start growing.

Tuesday 2/23 - Day 6

Read Psalm 48

...That you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will be our guide forever. -Psalm 48:13b,14

The last part of that verse literally says that God will be our guide "to the end," or "beyond death."

Who knows what tomorrow may bring? Who knows how you will die, or when? Will it be sudden, at a younger age than you expected? Will your life be extended until you're well up in years? Will death be painful? Could it have been avoided? How will it all end?

These are morbid questions, but most everyone asks them at one time or another.

There's one more question: What happens after the end? That's where the joy and the mystery are.

Today, think about some of these serious questions. As you do, remember that God is your guide right now. And tomorrow. And at the point of death. And beyond, forever and ever.

What's more, God knows what's best for you. God knows the days of your life and has known them from your mother's womb. God knows everything about you. And God loves you enough to be your guide for every step you have left to you.

Wednesday 2/24 - Day 7

Read Psalm 119:49-72

It is good for me that I was humbled [or afflicted], so that I might learn your statutes. The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. -Psalm 119:71,72

How often have you acknowledged the good that is coming out of your pain, hardship, or affliction?

The psalmist could see the value in the suffering that humbled him. Because it forced him to turn to God. It encouraged him to study the word and find what God would say to him through it.

Without his difficult circumstances, lethargy would have set in. He would have taken life easier. Taken God's word for granted. And coasted through life in a daze.

During times of suffering, God can truly speak to you. It's a time when you can be genuinely open to God's word, because you have nothing left to lose.

Despite his pain, the psalmist knew the priceless value of God's wisdom-wisdom he could read, meditate on, think through, and work out personally in his life. Even when that life was difficult.

Thursday 2/25 - Day 8

Read Psalm 50

Psalm 50 / [59,60] or 19, 46

"Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." -Psalm 50:15

God offers three simple steps for tough times: call on God, accept God's deliverance, and honor God as a result.

Of course, we all know that life-especially during the most troubling times-isn't handled quite so easily. Yes, you can count on these three steps. But allow for much anguish, fear, grief, anger, and other tough emotions in the process.

It's just the way we are-weak, untrusting, emotional human beings. It's hard for us to believe that God will hear our prayers, let alone rescue us from our difficulties.

So time after time we force ourselves to relearn this lesson. We struggle to rebuild our trust in God. We do battle with our weak wills and doubting hearts. And time after time, God is faithful to rescue us.

It's the rhythm of life as a child of God. The problems will come. Your faith will be shaken. But in the midst of it all, don't forget that God is ready to hear and answer.

Call on God.

Friday 2/26 - Day 9

Read Psalm 51

Psalm 40, 54 / 51

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. - Psalm 51:17

In a way, the sacrifices pictured what God wanted to occur in the hearts of God's people-repentance, worship, thanksgiving, cleansing. They were intended to reflect the truth that dwelt within the hearts of people of faith.

Often, however, the sacrificial system was often reduced to mere ritual-an end in itself rather than the means to the greater end of a rich relationship with God.

In the midst of personal turmoil and remorse over his sin, the psalmist recognized this truth. The sacrifices God truly desired were not mere actions performed but the beliefs and attitudes behind them.

The psalmist knew that a sin offering was meaningless unless it was given out of a broken, sorrowful spirit. The true sacrifice was the broken heart, not the literal broken body of an innocent animal.

We can get caught up in empty ritual just as easily when we approach God out of habit rather than out of a desire to love and serve God. Search your heart, examine your motives, and come to God, who yearns for you to be honest, open, and ready.

Saturday 2/27 - Day 10

Read Psalm 139:1-17

Psalm 55 / 138, 139:1-17/[18-23]

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. - Psalm 139:14

You are a complex creation. You will never be able to reach the depths of your existence, fully understand yourself, or ever finish exploring your being.

Physically, your body is a marvel of efficiency, fascinating in its detail. Emotionally, you are full of rich texture and color and depth. Spiritually, there are no limits to what you can experience with God.

God has made you to be so. God delighted to put your cells together the way they are. You are the only person like you; no one else has your physical, emotional, and spiritual makeup. And that's a matter for rejoicing. God has made you as you are.

With God, you can explore and grow and mature, becoming all that God intended you to be. How well does your soul know that? How accepting of yourself are you? How freely and genuinely can you praise God for what God has made?

Monday 3/1 - Day 11

Read Psalm 56

Psalm 56, 57, [58] / 64, 65

O Most High, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can flesh do to me? -Psalm 56:2b-4

Fear chills the bones and stirs the gut. Fear is sourced in anticipation of an undesired situation or event. We expect to be harmed in some way-physically or emotionally. And we become frozen in that unwanted expectation.

Sometimes there's a known cause for fear. Other times it seems to float through the body and soul without reason.

If you don't deal with fear in healthy ways, it can cause you to get emotionally stuck or angry or depressed. And as time passes and anxiety grows, you become hardened in your fear.

Break out. Shake yourself out of the trap of fear. And consciously put your trust in God.

When you acknowledge God's strength and sovereignty in your life, you realize that no human being can have any detrimental impact upon you beyond what you and God are able to bear.

Let go of the fear. Experience the peace only God can give. It is yours for the asking.

Tuesday 3/2 - Day 12

Read Psalm 62

Psalm 61, 62 / 68:1-20(21-23)24-36

For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. -Psalm 62:5,6

Life is full of waiting. Waiting for the light to change green. Waiting for the grocery checkout line to move. Waiting for the paycheck to come. Waiting to buy the house until you can really afford it. Waiting for love. Waiting for . . . what?

As we wait, expectations build. And typically the expectations become greater than anything reasonable. Which leads not only to frustration in the waiting but disappointment in the fulfillment.

The psalmist reminds his soul to wait calmly and patiently for God alone. And to build expectations in God alone. By doing so, he would never be shaken by disappointment.

What are you building your hopes on? A possible meaningful relationship? An acquired treasure? A personal advance in your career? Something else?

Or are you placing your trust in God, your rock and fortress? God alone can provide true fulfillment. But how

that fulfillment comes will probably be very different from what you expect.

Examine your expectations today. And wait calmly for God alone.

Wednesday 3/3 - Day 13

Read Psalm 72

Psalm 72 / 119:73-96

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen. -Psalm 72:18,19

Life can be full of splendor with God.

When was the last time you watched amazed as the day broke forth around you, the sun beaming through the trees, birds singing, the rumble of the city growing?

How often do you marvel at the easy joy a pet exudes? How long has it been since you reveled in the creativity of your fellow humans on display at a gallery or museum? Have you gazed lately at the stars in the night sky encompassing you? When did you last experience the pleasure of the warm, accepting smile and the long, meaningful hug of a close friend?

These are glorious things-the things God can bring into your life if you will only see them and recognize them for what they are.

Keep your spiritual eyes open to the miraculous things God does in the world around you-in creation, through God's creatures, in you. When you do, you'll join the psalmist in this hymn of praise.

Thursday 3/4 - Day 14

Read Psalm 71

Psalm [70], 71 / 74

Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you. -Psalm 71:6

When did you first know God? When did you first feel God's touch on your life, God's invitation to your soul to come be with God forever? When did you first hear of God's love for you? When did you first know that love in your heart?

Perhaps as a child. A young adult. Maybe even later in life.

And yet the psalmist sensed that God's care and concern extended back to the womb. He knew that God was with him from birth.

Do you remember your earliest years? What was your understanding of God then?

Perhaps those days were marked by a childlike faith in the goodness and love of God. An unquestioned acceptance, a deep and doubtless trust.

You can rekindle that fresh, simple faith today. Acknowledge your fears and doubts and questions, your theological understanding, your sophisticated worldliness. Then put them all aside. Talk to your Abba Father as you did then. And like the psalmist, offer praise for God's long-standing love for you.

Friday 3/5 - Day 15

Read Psalm 69

Psalm 69:1-23(24-30)31-38 / 73

I have become a stranger to my kindred, an alien to my mother's children. It is zeal for your house that has consumed me; the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me. -Psalm 69:8,9

Sometimes our life's path takes us far away from home, even from those we love.

As we mature as adults, cutting our cords with our parents and family members, finding our own way, making our own decisions, living our own lives, things happen.

Our choices may cause disputes and problems, even estrangement from those who were at one time the most important people in our lives-our parents, our siblings, our family.

In the psalmist's case, spiritual commitments and religious zeal brought separation from his own siblings. He was consumed by his relationship with God and strove to live it authentically and faithfully.

Your own spiritual or emotional growth may be making waves in your family. Accept it as part of the process. Draw comfort from the psalmist's encouragement. Reach out as best you can to your family, but keep your focus on being who you are as God's beloved child.

Saturday 3/6 - Day 16

Read Psalm 23

Psalm 75, 76 / 23, 27

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. -Psalm 23:1-3

It's morning on a hillside: rocky, steep in spots, spotted with dewy green grass and blazing wildflowers and scraggly brush and low trees. You awake to the breaking day, a cool snap in the air that feels refreshing. The sun beams reassuringly through broken clouds on the eastern horizon. Its warmth is palpable and growing.

All is well. All is right.

You have no need in life. You are content. Satisfied. Fulfilled. You are well fed in your shepherd's care. Your thirst can be quenched any time you need refreshment. Your soul can be restored whenever you are distressed or needy or empty.

The shepherd will carry you, hold you, care for you. He will keep your natural enemies at bay. He will search for you when you have wandered off the right path. And he will not give up until you are in his arms again.

There is peace in the presence of your shepherd. There is rest. Renewal. Refreshment of soul and body. Experience it today. It is real.

Spend some moments today on that hillside. Feel what it's like to be shepherded by the One who has your every need and desire at heart.

Monday 3/8 - Day 17

Read Psalm 77

Psalm 80 / 77, [79]

I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord; I will remember your wonders of old. I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds. -Psalm 77:11,12

Whatever happened to miracles?

Why are there no partings of the Red Sea today? Or feedings of thousands of hungry people with a few loaves and fishes? Or dead people being raised back to life? Is God still in the wonder-working business?

You can read parts of the Bible and wonder what happened. And then you can realize that there are just as many miracles-if not more-happening right under your nose today.

- An emotional release, a physical healing, an answer to prayer.
 - Clarity in a problem that's confused you for months.
 - A healed relationship you had long yearned to repair.
 - Solid affirmation of a decision you made.
 - Unexpected good news.
- A simple step of growth.

What other miracles and wonders in your life can you recall now as you sit in God's presence? They're all miracles of God. It just depends how you look at them.

Tuesday 3/9 - Day 18

Read Psalm 78

Psalm 78:1-39 / 78:40-72

Yet he, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; often he restrained his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath. He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and does not come again. -Psalm 78:38,39

How could God be so forgiving? How could God justify having compassion for people who turned their backs to God? How could God so totally love a people who refused to love back?

Simple: God is God. And God knew they were human beings. They were flesh and blood. Breath. Dust. And because of that, they tended to fall, to forget, to fail.

Yes, there were times of heartfelt love and obedience. Times they worshipped God out of a pure heart. But those times seemed so weak and rare compared to the many times they spurned God's love and neglected God's ways.

God could forgive because these were the people God made and loved. God made and loves you, too. And God accepts you, and forgives you, in all your humanity.

Don't be so hard on yourself when you fail. But make sure your heart is in the right place.

Wednesday 3/10 - Day 19

Read Psalm 119:97-120

Psalm 119:97-120 / 81, 82

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. -Psalm 119:105

Life can seem so dark at times. Cold, empty, void of good feelings.

The steps ahead of you are shadowed in doubt and confusion. You may feel alone in the darkness, unsure and afraid of what lies ahead. You don't know where to turn, which direction to take. In every sense, you are lost.

And then the light shines. Because you've turned to God through the word.

The psalmist proclaims the word of God as a lamp to light his path. It shows the way ahead. The rocks that threaten, the ruts that entrap, the forks in the road. And the more aware you are of the light, the brighter it shines for you.

God desires to be your guide along the path of your life. The first step is to open God's word. The second is to pray. The third is to trust. And keep moving.

Thursday 3/11 - Day 20

Read Psalm 42

Psalm [83] or 42, 43 / 85, 86

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? -Psalm 42:1,2

In the depths of your heart, how motivated are you to know God? Where is your list of priorities is knowing God and being known by God? Do you hunger for God in your life, day by day, moment by moment?

The psalmist did. He likened himself to a deer yearning for cool water to slake her thirst-a thirst that reached out from the core of her being.

The psalmist yearned for God as he did for life itself. He hungered to know God. So he would make his way to the temple of God as soon and as often as he could.

You can meet God anywhere. Anytime. Under any circumstances. But how much do you want to?

Ask God to add salt to your soul, to make you thirstier for God.

Friday 3/12 - Day 21

Read Psalm 92

Psalm 88 / 91, 92

For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. -Psalm 92:4

Consider the work of God's hands around you: The awesome, infinite creation... its beauty and order, its color and variety, its immensity and its detail.

Consider how God meets your needs for life and health and inspiration and fulfillment through creation: Witnessing a breathtaking sunset, sleeping under the stars amidst a chorus of insects, waking to the cheery chaos of the songs of many birds, walking through a fresh spring-painted forest, gaining strength through the rhythm of the ocean waves. Think of your own blessings from creation.

Consider, too, the work God has done in your life: learning how to deal with character flaws or deep-seated needs, discovering how to live authentically, enjoying the friendships God has brought into your life, struggling successfully through a difficult relationship. What else?

Throughout the day, consider God's work around you and in you. And, like the psalmist, "sing for joy."

Saturday 3/13 - Day 22

Read Psalm 136

Psalm 87, 90 / 136

[God] alone does great wonders, for his steadfast love endures for ever;

[God] by understanding made the heavens, for his steadfast love endures for ever;

[God] spread out the earth on the waters, for his steadfast love endures for ever... -Psalm 136:4-6

This psalm is a litany for the people's worship of the God they loved. Every statement about God elicits a strong response: God's steadfast love endures forever.

Because they knew that to be true, they were thankful for God's consummate goodness. Over and over they reminded themselves: God's steadfast love endures forever.

Today, think about the ways God has extended steadfast love to you.

Consider the works of the hands of God. Look into the night sky and be dazzled. See nature's bright, colorful, and complex majesty. Gaze into the eyes of someone you love.

Look beyond all that surface stuff and see what lies behind it all: God's steadfast love.

In love, God exploded with endless creativity. There are no limits to what God has accomplished. It is awesome to behold.

Take it all in today. See it for what it is: the divine expression of God's loving mercy toward us. Learn to look behind what you see, and find a delighted, creative, powerful God who loves you and has given you so much to enjoy in life.

And give thanks.

Monday 3/15 - Day 23

Read Psalm 89:1-18

Psalm 89:1-18 / 89:19-52

The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it-you have founded them. -Psalm 89:11

True stewardship involves managing every aspect of life as a child of God, not just money. And it all starts with an understanding that is captured by the psalmist in today's verse: It all belongs to God.

Everything. The heavens and the earth, even your home and your car. You own nothing. You may have deeds and receipts, but everything comes from the hand of God.

That means you need to care for it all, manage it with prudence and wisdom.

God put us on the earth for a purpose. Part of that purpose is caring for the earth itself. It is our home, but we are only renting it.

How are you accomplishing that divine goal? Your efforts in recycling, managing waste, saving electricity, and living a green life can help. Your work on behalf of protecting the environment can make a difference. It's all part of being a child of God and living on Planet Earth.

Tuesday 3/16 - Day 24

Read Psalm 94

Psalm 97, 99, [100] / 94, [95]

He who disciplines the nations, "he who teaches knowledge to humankind, does he not chastise? -Psalm 94:10

The world is one immense classroom. Life is one major advanced course. And God is the Teacher.

God instructs the nations. God corrects and disciplines when necessary. God shares the knowledge of the ages, insight into the present, and hope for the future with the classroom of the human race.

Some of us in the class tend to let our thoughts wander. Or fall asleep. Or worse, play hooky. Some of us don't even realize we're taking a course.

But there are a few who struggle to hear the Teacher speak, meditate on the truth they hear, and work hard to put the lessons learned into practice.

What kind of student are you? Think today of God as your Teacher. One who yearns to see you grow and develop in wisdom, knowledge, and character. One who works hard at leading you along the most effective path of progress. One who will delight in rewarding you with a "well done" in the final exam.

Wednesday 3/17 - Day 25

Read Psalm 101

Psalm 101, 109:1-4(5-10)20-30 / 119:121-144

I will study the way that is blameless. When shall I attain it? I will walk with integrity of heart "within my house; -Psalm 101:2

The psalmist made a commitment to live a life honoring the God who loved him. He pledged to live and act in a manner worthy of his identity and calling. As a child of God, he pledged to live in the light that God shed on his path.

His heart was in the right place. He wanted his life to reflect the glory of God. He yearned to do God will. He desired to live a life of authenticity and integrity.

Certainly, he failed. We all do. But God does not demand perfection from God's children. That's an impossible goal, and if it is ours, we will drive ourselves to distraction trying to live up to a false standard.

What God desires is a heart that is fundamentally tuned to God. A heart that beats with integrity and self-acceptance. A heart that seeks to know God. A heart that realizes that, even though it will grow cold from time to time and fail miserably, it is still set unalterably toward the face of God forever.

Thursday 3/18 - Day 26

Read Psalm 73

Psalm 69:1-23(24-30)31-38 / 73

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. -Psalm 73:26

God's word encourages us to take care of the body-to feed it properly, to keep it in good physical shape, to keep from poisoning it with unhealthy habits. After all, it is the dwelling place of the Creator, the true and living God over all.

And yet, we also must come to grips with our mortality. Our physical bodies will die. They will stop working. They will decay. They will return to dust. What's more, our physical body is the seat of our human nature, the

propensity to hurt ourselves and others.

The psalmist makes the point clearly: We can put no trust in ourselves. In one way or another, we will fail.

But we have a God who is our strength and our inheritance forever. One who willingly shares strength and grace with us. Today and forever.

Friday 3/19 - Day 27

Read Psalm 107:1-32

Psalm 102 / 107:1-32

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things. -Psalm 107:8,9

A dissatisfied soul can eat away at our core. We hunger for acceptance and love. We yearn for someone to want us. We long to be filled with serenity and hope. We work ourselves into a frenzy seeking to fill the emptiness and loneliness, and find ourselves so deeply needy that nothing seems to work.

Friends can help, loved ones can offer support, but the longing soul refuses to be satisfied. The emptiness is a vast, dark, cold ocean within that seems impossible to fill.

When we reach our limits, there is only one way out: to turn to God with our open, empty hands. Only God can satisfy; only God can fill. God's resources are without limit. God desires to give us an abundance.

The psalmist says, "Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love." Slowly, we learn to trust God. Even more slowly, we learn to thank God. You can take the first step today.

Saturday 3/20 - Day 28

Read Psalm 108:1-6

Psalm 107:33-43, 108:1-6(7-13) / 33

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth. Give victory with your right hand, and answer me, "so that those whom you love may be rescued. -Psalm 108:5,6

Life is too busy, isn't it? So many distractions vie for your time and energy. Work, family, spouse, friends, responsibilities. In your attempts to find fulfillment, even leisure activities can run you ragged.

You need time alone with God. These 40 days of Lent can help you do just that. Sometimes you need to force yourself to sit quietly, to think meditatively, to turn your attention to God. When you do, you can experience a restoration of the soul that only God can give.

Because only then can you see God apart from the distractions that cloud your vision. You can see God as honored and glorious, powerful and loving. And only then can God really hear you. And in hearing, rescue you. And in rescuing, save you.

For your soul's sake, carve out some time today to worship God. You'll find yourself joining in with the psalmist's song of praise.

Monday 3/22 - Day 29

Read Psalm 35

Psalm 31 / 35

Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me! Take hold of shield and buckler, and rise up to help me! -Psalm 35:1,2

You have an Advocate willing to plead your cause against those who oppose you, a Champion ready to fight those who fight against you. The Lord God.

You don't have to take care of yourself by yourself. You don't have to fight your battles alone. You don't have to defend yourself against attacks.

So let it go. And let God do it for you.

Of course, all this depends on whether you are walking in integrity. And whether God can defend your actions in righteousness.

If God can, when a situation arises in which you feel you must defend yourself, consciously make the decision to turn it over to God. And sense the stress and fear drain away as God rises up to help.

Tuesday 3/23 - Day 30

Read Psalm 126

Psalm [120], 121, 122, 123 / 124, 125, 126, [127]

May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves. -Psalm 126:5,6

Sowing is hard, back-breaking work. The sun bakes your skin. Your muscles scream in agony.

But the psalmist declares that sowing is a process that-though difficult-will bring about joy. Because a harvest results.

Your life involves a great deal of sowing. You're sowing seeds of love, trust, and health every day. You're sowing seeds to keep your relationships growing. To parent children positively. To make your career count. You're working to be all you can be for God.

It can be a painful. It can cause great weeping. But there will be an end. Those who honestly work hard at sowing good seeds will without doubt come home rejoicing.

Why? Because the fruit of your work will fill your life.

Don't lose heart as you sow. Keep working. Someday you will be rewarded.

Wednesday 3/24 - Day 31

Read Psalm 119:145-176

Psalm 119:145-176 / 128, 129, 130

I rise before dawn and cry for help; I put my hope in your words. -Psalm 119:147

A strained relationship keeps you worrying, pondering, trying to figure out what to do. A financial setback has you wondering how you'll make it this month and whether it will be worse next month. A rebellious child has you fearful about the consequences of his or her actions.

Life is full of potential worry zones. And, like the psalmist, you've probably spent a sleepless night or two in fear and anxiety over an issue that's important to you.

The psalmist arose before the dawn and prayed. He cried to God for help. And through it all, he maintained his hope in God's word.

You can stop the worry cycle. You can get off the anxiety treadmill. But you must make a decision of the will to do so. To give it over to God. And keep giving it over to God whenever you keep taking it back from God.

When you find yourself overwhelmed by your circumstances, get up. Cry out. Hope.

Thursday 3/25 - Day 32

Read Psalm 131

Psalm 131, 132, [133] / 140, 142

But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me. -Psalm 131:2

An infant is, by nature and necessity, one of the most self-absorbed creatures on earth. When she is hungry, she must have mother's milk. She demands it. She isn't satisfied until she gets it. But as the infant grows, is weaned, and become more mature, her self-focused demands are not quite as loud.

The psalmist has come to understand this personally. Rather than demanding to be fed, he was content simply to be held by God as though in his mother's arms. Affection is shared. He rests in the loving trust that has been established.

This was the state of his soul with God. He was content to be in God's embrace. In quiet confidence, his soul rested in God's peace.

He was growing, but still a child. And that childlike humble trust is what God calls for each of us to display.

Friday 3/26 - Day 33

Read Psalm 143:1-11

Psalm 22 / 141, 143:1-11(12)

Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. -Psalm 143:8

How do you begin your day?

Your eyes open sleepily. You stretch, toss in bed a few moments debating whether to arise or catch a few more winks. Then your mind starts working through the day ahead.

The meeting you have with the client you've had such trouble pleasing. Your child's cold that just won't go away. The funny noise your car is making. The bills you need to pay before you get your next paycheck. Your aunt who is dying. On and on it goes, until your stomach gets tied up in knots and you just want to cover your head with your blanket and make it all go away.

Here's another option. Don't deny that those things are real in your life, but pray through them. As soon as you can make a conscious thought, remind yourself that you trust God, and that God will be with you through it all.

Then pray about all those things as they come to your mind. Turn them over to God. Put your life into the able hands of God, who delights in a soul that trusts in God.

Saturday 3/27 - Day 34

Read Psalm 137

Psalm 137:1-6(7-9), 144 / 42, 43

By the rivers of Babylon- there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. -Psalm 137:1,2

Imagine being forced from your home, from your land, and taken to a distant country, an entirely different culture-one that did not know the God you worshiped.

The psalmist remembered those days in foreign Babylon. When they remembered their homeland, they wept. Their hearts could not sing; their musical instruments were put away. They could only mourn.

Perhaps an event in your life comes to mind. A time you had to move away against your will. The loss of a loved one. A period of depression and mourning. The death of a dream.

Perhaps you're still right in the middle of it. If so, God is there with you. Babylon did not know or worship God, but God was there. Eventually, God helped the people to overcome the situation and return to their homeland.

One way or another, God will do the same for you.

In the meantime, weep if you need to. Put away your lyre if you're unable to use it. And wait on God.

Holy Week

Monday 3/29 - Day 35

Read Psalm 36:5-11

Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep; -Psalm 36:5,6

Sometimes the best thing we can do is to look up, get our eyes off ourselves and our problems, and consider the God who loves us.

Today's verses will help us do that. Because when we think about God-God's character, attributes, and ways-the dark corners of our lives start to disappear in the brightness of God's holy, loving light.

Consider God's steadfast love. Think about where you might well be today if not for God's grace and mercy despite your own failures.

Consider God's faithfulness. God's care and concern for you is stubborn and unyielding. No matter what you

do or what happens to you, God will be with you forever.

Consider God's righteousness. It is immense and infinite, pure in every way. It is a lamp for your feet, so you may observe where to journey step by step.

Consider God's judgments. God's will is absolutely right. God understands all. So you can trust God wholeheartedly for every aspect of life.

Consider God. And be lifted up.

Tuesday 3/30 - Day 36

Read Psalm 71:1-14

Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. -Psalm 71:3

God is your salvation. That reality is ever in effect, now and always.

The psalmist praised God for this certainty, for he knew God was the foundation of his life-God was his rock of refuge, his strong fortress. A place of safety he could always run to for care and protection from whatever may threaten him.

In our world today, we tend to develop few roots. We move frequently, change jobs and even careers often, find new circles of acquaintances. So in times of fear or loneliness we may not have developed a place for us-a safe, centering dwelling that is ours, protected from the elements of the world where we can be secure from harm.

God can be that place. Wherever we find ourselves, whatever we may need, we can run to God and find ourselves safe at home. God is our dwelling place forever and ever. Wherever we may be.

Wednesday 3/31 - Day 37

Read Psalm 70

Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you. Let those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!" -Psalm 70:4

Seeking God arises from a hunger of the soul that cannot be filled until heaven.

To the child of God, therefore, all of life on this planet consists of seeking God. And that seeking may express itself in any number of ways.

It can be hard work, and it can come easily. It can be incredibly painful, and it can create the greatest of pleasure. It can be deadly dry and dull, and it can be the most excitement a human heart can bear.

Yet through it all, the psalmist invites all who seek God to rejoice and be glad in the process. To have as a foundation for life the sense that after all is said and done, it is well with my soul. My heart is glad. My spirit sings.

And as a result, our innermost being continually sings, "God is great!"

Even in the darkness of this day, let God be glorified, honored, praised, and adored. For God is the One who calls us to seek God. God is the One whom we will ultimately find. And enjoy forever.

Thursday 4/1 - Day 38

Read Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. -Psalm 116:1,2

You have a friend you could call at any hour and know you will be welcomed. A friend who will spend whatever time you need to talk. A friend who will listen to your pains and problems with compassion and understanding. A friend who will be there to support you when life's events seem to drag you down. A friend who will even weep with you during the darkest times of life.

You may have a human friend of that nature. But you certainly have a heavenly One.

God hears your voice, your pleas. God always keeps an ear turned toward you. But even more, God acts on your behalf. Far more than a human friend, God can give you what you truly need.

The psalmist loved God. He was thankful for God's listening ear. He knew he could call upon God at any time. And that he would do for as long as he lived. How about you?

Friday 4/2 - Day 39

Read Psalm 22

In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame. -Psalm 22:4,5

Trust. Deliverance. The two are interrelated, cause and effect.

Trust in God, cry out in distress, and God will deliver you. God will remove you from the situation or give you the grace and strength to get through it.

This was a lesson the psalmist learned time and time again from the story of his Israelite ancestors.

Like Noah, who listened and obeyed a seemingly odd request of his God to build an ark, but who because of his faithfulness was spared a watery death.

Like Abraham, who obeyed God continually throughout his long life and was rewarded with the heritage of an entire nation.

Like Moses, who despite running from Egyptian authorities for his crimes of passionate justice was used by God to lead a nation to freedom.

And now, like Jesus, who though he hangs helplessly on the cross in apparent defeat, would in three days rise in glorious triumph.

The lessons continue if we will recognize them.

Saturday 4/3 - Day 40

Read Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16

You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me. -Psalm 31:3

We yearn for God to lead and guide us. We ask for his leadership and guidance daily, usually just tacking the request to the end of our prayers.

It would be nice to know exactly what to do and where to go, wouldn't it? To get God's daily directions every morning and just follow the divine "to do" list specially prepared for us? Especially on this day, when all seems lost, we crave direction.

Well, God doesn't seem to work that way. We have the Bible. And God has given us the Spirit. And those are the avenues through which God usually leads and guides us.

The psalmist seeks this guidance-but not just for his own satisfaction. He desires to be led and guided for God's sake, for God's glory.

When you face a life decision, or when you simply want to be aware of God's guidance for you this day, rely on your rock. Run to your fortress. And trust that God will give you all you need, tell you all you need to know, one way or the other. Then God's name will be honored through you.

And tomorrow, you will awaken in a whole new day.

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