



**PSALMS 1-41
DEVOTIONAL**

By Pastor Phil Emerson

NAME: _____

OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

Lifegroup 12s

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

Lifegroup 3s

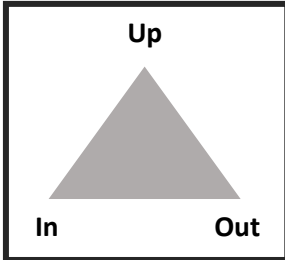
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily walk in the ways of Jesus, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus taught and modelled out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.

INTRODUCTION TO PSALMS

The Psalms are a beautiful, heartrendingly honest compilation of truth from various writers. In them we have:

- *Laments*, which lay troubled situations before the Lord, asking Him for help. This is the largest theme covering a staggering third of all psalms.
- *Praise psalms*, which call God's people to admire His great attributes and deeds.
- *Thanksgiving psalms*.
- *Celebration psalms* (my favourite falls in this section – Psalm 119).
- *Wisdom psalms*.
- *Songs of confidence*, which enable worshipers to deepen their trust in God in difficult circumstances.
- *Royal psalms* or some call them *Messianic*.
- *Historical psalms*, which take lessons from the history of God's dealings with His people.
- *Prophetic psalms*, which echo the Prophets, calling people to faithfulness.

The Psalms are in five books or sections:

Book 1 (Psalms 1-41) make frequent use of the name *Yahweh*. All but two of these are written by David.

Book 2 (Psalms 42-72) make frequent use of the name *Elohim*.

Book 3 (Psalms 73-89) contain most of the Asaph writings and are said to be the bleakest section.

Book 4 (Psalms 90-106) remind us that God led Israel long before David or the kings came along.

Book 5 (Psalms 107-150) are all quite celebratory and conclude with the five hallelujah psalms.

Live

The author of this psalm is anonymous (some compare it to Proverbs and suggest Solomon wrote it). We are reminded of the need to maintain balance in our relationships with unbelievers. The apostle Paul knew the benefits of good company, as well as the dangers of bad. He exhorted the Corinthians to be careful of their associations: *“Do not be misled; bad company corrupts good character.”* (1 Corinthians 15:33) Psalm 1 begins by describing the company that the righteous person, the person called *“blessed”*, does not choose. The verbs used show the progression of those who start down the *“way of sinners”*: first they *“walk”*, then *“stand”*, then *“sit”* (verse 1). What begins as a casual visit ends as a permanent residence. But how does the righteous person spend his time? In delight and meditation on *“the law of the Lord”*. He feeds on God’s counsel; God’s Word is his good company, night and day. For us, that means paying close attention to the Word of God, making it our daily delight and the subject of our study and meditation. Jesus called it ‘abiding in Him’ and allowing His Word to abide in us. His promise is that when we do this, we will be spiritually fruitful (John 15). The psalmist has basically the same message, comparing a person of the Word with a fruitful tree planted in a good location. It’s a great picture of the freshness and new life we associate with springtime. The good news is that this does not have to be just a seasonal or a temporary way of life for God’s people. The writer says that the person whose heart is set on God flourishes in every season and, *“whatever he does prospers”*. Today review your friendships. In which direction is the influence taking you? It’s worth thinking about.

Pray

Father, it’s an honour and incredible privilege to walk in Your ways and sit in Your presence. Nothing compares with the fact that I can call you *Abba*. I was a slave to sin, death, selfishness and fear when You rescued and redeemed me. And now, as this psalm reminds me, I can be like a tree set in a prosperous place by meditating on Your Word. I believe this is true; help me believe it even more. Turn up the volume of the Spirit’s voice in my soul so that all other voices will be drowned out. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

Again, today the author of this psalm remains blurry, but most people attribute it to David. A few years ago I had the privilege of visiting Bethel Church in Redding. I drove there one late Friday evening across a mountain range and got caught in a bush fire. There were fire crews everywhere and, without sounding too dramatic, we were glad to escape. Oh my word, I couldn't believe the incredible speeds at which fire travels. The picture of an unstoppable fire moving with irresistible power helps us understand the picture of Messiah's reign. Psalm 2 is called a 'royal psalm' that was used at the coronation of the kings who were in David's line. This psalm leaves no doubt about the absolute nature of Christ's rule when He returns to take His throne as King and rule in His kingdom. According to Revelation 19:17-21, Jesus will find His enemies assembled against Him when He rides out of Heaven as the conquering King. But He will sweep these armies away as quickly and completely as my fire experience on the road to Redding. In light of who Jesus is as God's Son and chosen Ruler, the psalmist is amazed that rebellious nations would even attempt to resist Him. Jesus' Kingdom will not be a democracy; He will rule "*with an iron sceptre*" (verse 9) that smashes His foes like a china cup. The language of verse 11 is one of worship, showing that the only wise response to the Messiah's irresistible power and authority is to bow before Him in submission. Paul says that one day every person will bow before Jesus Christ and confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). Is there anyone in your family or circle of acquaintances who does not know Jesus Christ as Saviour? I suggest making a time of focused prayer for a friend or relative who does not know the truth. Ask God to lay someone close to you on your heart today and begin to pray for that person's salvation.

Pray

Father, thank You for Your patience and grace for all those who are lost. I love how You loved me when I was at my very worst. Thank You for being beside me at all times. I know there are seasons when I may not recognise this, but I'm glad You are my Father and I love you. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Read

Psalm 3

Live

This is one of my favourite psalms. I call it my 'O Lord' psalm. David wrote this when his own son Absalom drove him from the throne. As you read it, please note the three 'O Lord' sections (verses 1, 3, 7). There are three 'Selahs' which most likely mean 'hit the pause button and think about what you just read'. During His ministry on earth, Jesus put a great deal of time into training twelve special disciples. He taught them, told them parables, prayed for them, and answered their many questions. He had called them from different walks of life to follow Him as friends. Imagine, then, how much it must have hurt Him to know that one would betray Him. What pain must have filled His final words to Judas: *"Friend, do what you came for."* He was betrayed not by an enemy or a religious leader, but by someone into whom He'd poured His life for three years. That's the way David felt in today's psalm. His son, Absalom, had betrayed him and led a rebellion against his throne (see 2 Samuel 15-19). David had bottomed out personally (as father), professionally (as king), and spiritually. At this lowest of low points, he fled to God in prayer. The situation seemed hopeless. Enemies surrounded him and it appeared God had deserted him. Nevertheless, David's faith remained strong. Even the lament of the opening verses is framed within the prayer, *"O Lord"*. Why? Because God was greater than the awful situation David was in, even greater than the betrayal of his own son. David was sure enough of God's answer that he could sleep peacefully under the Lord's protection, and keep courage when his enemies were drawn up on every side. The psalm closes with an emotional climax. David prayed that God would arise, sustain and rescue him, and strike down the wicked. He understood God's character and demonstrated complete faith that He would deliver His anointed king.

Pray

Father, today I confess my own failings and sometimes lack of compassion for those around me. I thank You that You forgive my failings and I ask You to graciously give me a spirit of love and forgiveness that sees only the good in others, bears no grudges and forgives all grievances. May I learn to forgive as You have forgiven me and trust You like David did. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

Ok, so I'm stretching you to two chapters today. One of the things that God has taught me is that there are lessons to be learned in pain and trial. God can use difficulties to teach and transform us. But it's still not easy or pleasant, and so we cry out for comfort, as David did: *"Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer."* (4:1) When we pray, there's no need to tiptoe around our real thoughts and feelings; we can urgently and directly call on God. Such boldness is a sign of faith. It shows we believe He is the kind of God who wants, and is able, to respond to our prayers. David believed God was righteous and merciful and would come to his aid. *"Give me relief,"* literally means, *"make a spacious place for me,"* a picture of freedom and security. Whatever the exact situation that prompted David to write Psalm 4, the crisis clearly had a public dimension. As we continue reading different psalms, you'll notice that body language is an important part of the psalmist's prayer life. He talks about lying down, etc. Whatever you are going through today don't be afraid to be honest with God. If you are tired, frustrated, angry or just plain disappointed, tell Him. He's a big God and can handle it; He knows it anyway so don't try to fool Him. Get on your knees and tell Him.

Psalm 5 is a prayer for help and refuge in times of trouble. As he had done in earlier psalms, David begins by describing his situation. He felt discouraged and was waiting in faith for God to act, knowing, as he closes his remarks, that the God whom he loves will cover him with favour like a shield. Beautiful!

Pray

Father, there have been seasons of disappointment in my life's journey but today I thank You that in those times You have never been more real. And 'real' is what You require of me in those times as well – authentic cries of the soul, not living a lie or trying to suppress my real feelings. I love that You know every secret of my heart. The psalmist reminds me that You know my thought afar off. I love You and I pray in the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

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What am I going to do about it?

Read

Psalm 6

Live

This psalm is commonly known as the first of the PENITENTIAL PSALMS (the other six are 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Certainly its language is that of a penitent person, for it expresses sorrow, perhaps after David's time with Bathsheba. It opens with David crying out to the Lord not to rebuke him in His anger, and not to chasten him in His displeasure. We know from Hebrews 12:6 *"the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."* David's cry for mercy from the Lord is because he is weak in his sin. He begs for healing and forgiveness for his bones are *'troubled'* (the Hebrew meaning of this word is *'tormented'*). When we are saved and we get into sin, nothing is right in our mind or spirit – and even our bodies bear the effect. David is groaning about his physical state and asks God how long he would have to face and feel this emptiness in his heart. He cries out for God to return to him and deliver him out of this bondage of sin that he is in. When we know the sweetness of God and the peace of God, we miss it desperately when it is not there. David's feeling of spiritual death and lack of peace makes him feel as if he cannot even praise the Lord. He is crying out to God as we can see by his graphic description of *'flooding his bed with tears; drenching his couch, and his eyes wasting away'*. My good daylight, this guy is upset. I love how things change here because he has given it to God. What happens when we finally give it ALL to the Lord God of Heaven? There can be no sitting on the fence, no nominal Christianity. We are either in or we're out! I love how verse 9 unveils our Father who hears our plea and accepts our prayers.

Pray

Father, You are an amazing God who hears my every cry. Help me today to be as ruthless with the sin in my life as I am with the sin in others. So often I look OUT because it prevents me from looking IN. I feel Your glare of love today that unpacks my soul and bares my sin. Forgive me today and help me to follow you without pretence. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

This is a great psalm about dealing with slander. If you have ever been slandered or lied about, this is great learning today in how to deal with it. David begins by laying himself out before God – fully laying it all out. There's something to be said for holding your cards close to your chest at times, as you need to be very careful who you reveal all to, but when David is the victim of slander, he goes running to God, and he doesn't hold anything back. He lays down all his cards before God. It's ok for us to ask God to act and to set things straight. It's ok to hand your accuser over into God's hands. After all, God does tell us that vengeance is His and He will repay (Romans 12:19). Lay the situation before God clearly and ask God to act justly to set the situation right. At verse 8, David switches and he talks *about* God as well as *to* God, which I do sometimes too. It's a bit like telling God how good and righteous He is. Here David prays like he senses God has heard and has risen up in answer to his prayer. Maybe a simple way to think about it is that David shifts his focus from the problem to God. I love verse 17 where David doesn't just make God a theory, but he gazes at Him with splendour and love, *"I will sing to the name of the LORD, the Most High."* What a magnificent lesson in dealing with gossip and slander. Here David is asking God to judge him according to his righteousness and his integrity. Ask yourself this question, if you were standing before God today and you asked God to judge you according to your righteousness and your integrity, how would you do?

Pray

Father, I pray today that You will fill me afresh with Your Holy Spirit so I can deal graciously, lovingly and truthfully with those who falsely accuse or slander me. I need constantly reminded that righteousness defends itself, and when I fight back in a fleshly manner it only fuels the enemy in the situation. I think of Jesus; when He suffered, He did not threaten back; when He was accused, He stood quiet before His accusers. What an image. What an example. I love how You lead me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

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Live

The amazing design of the created world should inspire not only our study, but also our worship, as it does for David in today's psalm. It opens and closes with identical descriptions of the majesty of God's name. Eternal, self-existent, the one and only incredible God. His glory is the highest truth in the universe and one of the greatest proofs of His existence. This is why the praise of God in the mouths of children is enough to silence the enemy – this was partially quoted by Jesus after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and driving the money changers out of the temple (Matthew 21:16). I grew up in the country and a good friend and I used to lie out on our backs on the ground at night and observe the night sky, talking about how God knew each star by name. It is one of my fondest boyhood memories. I think maybe David did the same out in the fields as a shepherd boy and, like me, when he considered the night sky it drove him to worship. Psalm 8 suggests that he observed attentively, he reflected, he meditated, and saw the moon and stars as pointing to their Maker. He is then led to thoughts about the place and purpose of humanity. How is it that we matter to God? Why does He pay so much attention to us? If you fancy a further study, you could turn to Job 7:17-18 as he asks these questions too. For what reason does God love and honour us? Why did He appoint us to rule over the created world? Again, if you want to go deeper read Genesis 1:28; Hebrews 2:6-9. How about planning a time of worship today for yourself, even with your family or a friend, which could be centred around creation and the majesty of God.

Pray

Father, thank You that You shine over all creation. Thank You that there is not an inch of space or a moment of time that You can't say, 'That doesn't belong to Me' or 'I haven't been there'. The heavens certainly display Your handiwork and You tell us that You know every star by name. What majestic splendour. And when You drew it all out with Your indelible marker, I was included! I love You, Lord. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Read

Psalm 9

Live

This quote from A. W. Pink's book 'In the Godhood of God' is quite heavy but read it a few times slowly and let it sink in. *"To speak of the Godhood of God is to say that the Helm is in His hand, and that He is steering according to His own good pleasure. To speak of the Godhood of God is to say that He is the Potter, that we are the clay and that out of the clay He shapes one as a vessel to honour and another as a vessel to dishonour according to His own sovereign rights. To speak of the Godhood of God is to give the mighty Creator His rightful place; it is to recognize His exalted majesty; it is to acknowledge His universal sceptre."*

In Psalm 9 David praises God for His sovereignty over the nations, especially seen in judgment on the wicked. When I first read this I was a bit shocked at David's choice of words ... *'rebuked; destroyed; blotted out their name; everlasting ruin; uprooted their cities'*. I wondered, are we really allowed to pray like this when we know the truth that God hates sin and judges righteously? This core truth is seen clearly in verses 7-10. God is the eternal king of the universe, the righteous judge, but this does not make Him distant or uncaring. He is also a *"refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble."* His righteousness and justice are expressed through love, which means that He is a protector and champion for the needy and He is faithful and more than worthy of our trust. The best response to God's sovereignty is to say and sing wholehearted praises to the One who rules us all with both authority and loving-kindness. If you have been struggling with people around you who are getting away with evil things, hand it over today to the righteous Judge.

Pray

Father, today I thank You that You are in control. You even control my enemies and so I rest assured today that You judge righteously. I would be either too soft or too hard, so I trust You. I will sleep easy tonight knowing that You have the whole world in Your capable hands and that *'You will judge the world in righteousness; You will govern the peoples with justice'*. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

“Arise, Lord! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless.” The United Nations recently estimated that 25,000 people a day die of hunger around the world. Every year, six million children under the age of five suffer from hunger. There are around 840 million malnourished people globally, with 95 percent of them in developing nations. While the number of such people has decreased in Asia, it has actually increased in Africa. The hungry are often victims of war, corruption or greed. When we hear about the poor and the powerless, we should be moved to prayer, as the psalmist was in today’s reading. Many commentators think Psalms 9 and 10 were originally one, and indeed a thread running through both is that a sovereign and just God upholds those who cannot stand on their own. Yesterday we focused on God’s sovereignty; today we’ll look more at how He cares for the victims in the world. In this psalm the oppressors are described as arrogant, powerful, wicked, self-confident, and self-centred. They hunt, trap, lie, threaten, ambush, plot against, and crush those who stand in their way or have something they want. Their attitude toward God is even worse. They pay no attention to Him or His laws, and even when they do, they slander His name, claiming He either doesn’t see or won’t do anything. When you read verse 1 it might make you feel as though God is far away. David prayed for Him to teach the oppressors a lesson and break their power. He believed that God does see and will hold the wicked accountable. After all, He is the *“helper of the fatherless”* (verse 14). He hears and encourages the afflicted and steps up to defend the victims as there’s a special place in His heart for them. Today write your own prayer for the victims of war and evil people.

Pray

A friend sent me this prayer: *‘Father, I give You my hands to do Your work. I give You my feet to go Your way. I give You my eyes to see as You do. I give You my tongue to speak Your words. I give You my mind that You may think in me. I give You my spirit that You may pray in me. Above all, I give You my heart that You may love in me. I give You my whole self that You may grow in me. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.’*

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

We often don't know who's right and who's wrong or which side is telling the truth. There are two good reasons that human judgment often fails: we are not perfect, and we lack full knowledge in any situation. But heaven's Judge possesses both of these qualifications. From His heavenly throne, God's eyes "*behold*". He examines hearts and discerns motives and judges accordingly. God examines the righteous and since He is righteous and loves justice, those who are upright before Him will see His face. Absolutely nothing escapes the sight of the heavenly Judge, just in case you had the idea that God sits impassively in the heavens, watching but not getting involved with the events of earth. The wicked will not escape His justice.

In Psalm 12 it looked as if the godly had vanished from society. That wasn't actually true, but it seems like the psalmist is a little depressed at the moment. I love his simple prayer, telling God what he saw and asking Him to do something about it. He saw people lying and living a double life and asks God to sort them out. He saw people living for themselves and prayed for God's perfect Word to be revealed. He saw people oppressing the weak and prayed for Him to watch over the needy. David fully trusted God to answer these prayers. And yet, it did seem as if the wicked were running the show, and on that note the prayer ends. David honestly portrayed the situation at that time; all was not well with the world. But his faith was strong enough to look the facts full in the face and still believe God would act. Have you noticed any differences between David's prayers and your own? Has the Spirit convicted you about anything specific going on around you?

Pray

Father, may the fire of the Holy Spirit burn up the dross in my heart, warm it with love, and set it on fire with zeal for You. Help me to realise that it's not my job to be judge and executioner. As a matter of fact, the Bible often warns me against such folly and the results of falling into it. Today, I lift my eyes to You, O Lord. It is from You all my help comes. Keeping my own heart right is a big enough job for me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

The forceful *“How long?”* that opens this psalm gives us the impression that David is frustrated, to say the least. Actually, there are no less than four of these questions. It’s like he’s asking, ‘Does God know what He’s doing? Does He have a plan? Has He forgotten us?’ *“Forget”* is an even stronger word in Hebrew than in English, suggesting neglect and lack of care. In his prayer, David describes his feelings of abandonment; he felt forgotten and he couldn’t sense God’s presence. He wrestled internally with loneliness, doubt, and sorrow, and to make it worse, his enemies seemed to be triumphing. Some commentators believe the king was suffering from a serious illness because of the *“sleep in death”* mentioned in verse 3, showing his desperate state of mind. These are strong feelings, but faith is always more than a feeling. David’s prayer continued by calling on the Lord to, *“Look on me and answer.”* I love this guy! Despite God’s apparent silence he still believed in God as he says, *“O Lord **my** God,”* showing he still desired God’s presence most of all. I love verse 5, *“but I have trusted in your mercy.”* The bottom line to David was God’s unfailing love, and so he could say God, *“has been good to me”* or *“dealt bountifully with me,”* as if it had already happened. You’ve got to take your hat off to this guy. I am always amazed at how he can be so brutally honest and transparent about his feelings and frustrations and then in a few sentences turn it around to God’s unfailing love and supply. Outstanding, me thinks. I loved that prayer today. It’s a bit of a mind bender, but so true. May we be like the psalmist today – not afraid to voice our frustration to our Father, while always acknowledging His superb greatness.

Pray

Father, I absolutely love this psalm and I love the psalmist who writes with such honesty, passion and love for You. He knew You in a special way because he knew You knew him. I thank You for knowing me better than I know myself, and for letting me know myself better than others know me. Make me, I pray, better than other people suppose, and forgive me for what they do not know. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
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What am I going to do about it?

Live

This psalm is almost identical to the 53rd psalm. Its main difference is the term used for God's name. Today, the name *Yahweh* is used while Psalm 53 uses *Elohim*. Some call this a 'wisdom psalm' written to the chief musician with its main theme being the wrongness of the powerful in society who take advantage of the weak. It is a reminder that God is on the side of the faithful and will rise up on their behalf and put an end to the plans of their oppressors. It begins with a strong term, "*the fool*". The word translated as fool is 'nabal' meaning 'ignorant'. What causes this ignorance here we are not told, but "*says in his heart*" is an interesting phrase. The word for heart leans to the thinking part of a person. So it could be better understood as '*thinks in his mind*' or even more generally, just believes '*there is no God*'. It is interesting that the psalmist describes these men by their beliefs rather than by their appearance or actions, possibly leading us to understand them to be pretty superficial. On the other hand, it is just as likely that the psalmist is saying that they are corrupt down to the core of their being. We then see God's rebuke and judgement of the fools. When you read a passage like this you can understand why the psalmist would declare the name 'fool' or 'ignorance' over them. I love how verse 7 turns to the study of restoration, which our Bible is jam-packed with. Although we are imperfect, God has given us His revelation, the Bible, to guide us in living lives of righteousness that please Him. Think of something that you would love God to restore in you or for you today, and bombard heaven with it.

Pray

Father, thank You that I grew up in a place that at least believed in a God. How could we ever think You didn't exist? You are the Creator of light and yet at the rising of the sun each morning You are the greatest of all lights. Your love rises like the sun over all the world. May it rise afresh within my heart today. Let me never be overtaken by ignorance of Your devices and be termed a fool. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

“Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?” (verse 1) What incredible questions to kick off with today. One of the classics of church history is ‘The Practice of the Presence of God’ by Brother Lawrence, a seventeenth-century French monk. He learned to sense and enjoy God’s presence no matter what. He recounts his experience through the book’s collection of letters and conversations. He once said, *“I walk before God simply, in faith, with humility and with love; and I apply myself diligently to do nothing and think nothing which may displease Him. I hope that when I have done what I can, He will do with me what He pleases.”* I love this! To dwell in God’s presence was also David’s purpose and joy. Over and over David declares to us how much the presence of God means to him and today’s psalm focuses entirely on seeking this blessing. The answer in Psalm 15 to the questions in verse 1 describes the person who dwells in God’s presence; it is also a prayer to be or become such a person. When we seek to deepen our prayer lives and draw closer to God (as we’re doing in this devotional study), we should pray to be made into this kind of person. So, what kind of people can enjoy God’s presence? What qualities does God love? The list is daunting. They must be blameless, upright and righteous. They must love those who love God and keep their promises, no matter what. They need to control their tongues, avoiding lies and gossip. They should be generous and compassionate and not trample on the poor. Of all my devotional writings to date, verse 5 nails a truth that has challenged me the most, *“He who does these things shall never be moved.”* David desired above all else to enjoy God’s presence. Using today’s psalm as a model, pray to be made into this kind of person, one who wants intimacy with God above anything else life has to offer.

Pray

Father, *“One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple.”* Psalm 27:4. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

Jonathan Edwards wrote that believers should have *“a real sense of the excellency of God, and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption. Also that they should have a sense of the gloriousness of God in their heart. There should also be a belief that God is holy, and that while holiness is a good thing there is also a sense of the loveliness of God’s holiness.”* In today’s psalm, the psalmist has this sense of God. God means all the world to him. *“Apart from you I have no good thing.”* Even the finest gifts in the world can’t satisfy what the human heart really wants – not things, but relationship. This doesn’t mean that David wasn’t thankful for his family and other blessings. It simply meant that God Himself was greater than any of His gifts, He was the all-sufficient, all-satisfying joy, truth, and purpose of David’s life. King David, who had unbelievable success and wealth, clearly understood this. At the beginning of today’s psalm, David exclaimed that if God were not a part of his life, he would have nothing good and that trying to find life from any other source would only lead to sorrow. David used this imagery to describe the things that God had given him in life, both tangible and intangible. *“Portion”* often referred to one’s destiny or lot in life. David was acknowledging that God had given him a good portion or, as we might say, a good life. What had God done for David? He had given him wisdom and strength; the Lord had given the king a cup of blessings and a generous portion of His goodness. David was aware that God still speaks when we sleep. Oh, I love this thought, the God of heaven watching over my mind and instilling it with good things even as I sleep, speaking to me in dreams and visions. This chapter communicates feelings of peace, prosperity, and safety, all grounded in a personal relationship with God. Sometimes it’s hard to grasp that God Himself is the most delightful inheritance of all.

Pray

Father, You indeed are my portion. When I have You I have everything and without You I have nothing and am a nobody. I love the language of this psalm and how I’m reminded the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places. I rest in Your hope. You show me the path of life. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

I read this recently and thought it was beautiful: *“The room is quiet and dark, save for a small lamp on a stand by the door. A wooden crib stands against one wall, near a changing table. A few toys and books lie scattered on the floor. The mother sits quietly in a rocking chair, cradling her baby girl and singing softly. It’s bedtime. The child snuggles closer and closes her eyes. At that moment, all is well and right in that child’s world. She is completely secure and at peace in her mother’s arms.”* So it should be with us as we rest securely in God’s love. David was confident in God’s justice; he knew God would vindicate him. I often think this confidence was because he kept things good between him and God. He humbly invited God to test and examine him, so this was not a prideful claim. He was willing to submit to the perfect Judge. And he didn’t claim to have achieved righteousness on his own, but freely admitted he had avoided the path of sin through following God’s Word. David prayed that God would show His love and power in order to demonstrate their special relationship to outsiders. His confidence flowed primarily from this personal relationship. I love that God was his *‘place of refuge’* and David was *‘the apple of God’s eye’*. The *‘apple’* is the pupil in the very centre, the most delicate part that is especially valuable and worthy of protection. How does it feel to rest securely in God’s loving strength? Our illustration gave a picture of a mother holding her baby. David used images such as hiding in a strong tower, walking on a straight path, and a mother bird covering her chicks with her wings. What about you? What does it feel like to you personally? Today make a metaphor or word picture to express your answer. This can be a creative way to express your love and trust in your heavenly Father.

Pray

Father, today I throw open every door and window of my heart. Come on in and establish multiple footholds of mercy, grace, and compassion. I abandon myself to Your beauty and bounty today. *‘Keep me as the apple of your eye.’* Or as one version says, *‘Guard me as you would guard your own eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings.’* In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

This is a very special psalm. It is so special that you will find it in two places in the Bible. Here, in the book of Psalms, and also in the book of Samuel (2 Samuel 22). Why is Psalm 18 in the book of Samuel? Because it is David's own story of his life. We can break this chapter into six parts to help us understand it better. It is probably easier to study it in sections, but we must read the whole psalm to understand the life of David, that is why it is also in 2 Samuel. Part 1: God is a Rock for David. Its main theme is the saving character of the Lord and how He exercises His power to protect and deliver those who love and follow Him. Part 2: David asks for help. Read the depth in these words. Have you ever shouted to the Lord for help? Part 3: God answers David. In this phenomenal piece of scripture we get a glimpse of God's awesome power coming down to answer our call. Part 4: why God gives help to people. I love this! Amazing. Part 5: everything that David owns comes from God. He returns to the theme of God's greatness and mighty perfection and describes how He has empowered him to win even more victories. Though David claimed amazing strength, he wasn't boasting in himself, but in the Lord. Part 6: God made David king. See if you can figure out the six parts – I purposely didn't give you the verses! As a believer in Jesus Christ, He has rescued you just as surely and powerfully as He rescued David in today's psalm. David, in his distress, prayed for help and then watched as the incredible Divine Warrior rushed to his aid and won the battle in awe-inspiring fashion. God snatched him from danger and set him in a "*spacious place*", both secure and free.

Pray

Father, today would You rescue me from my prejudices and free me from all my pettiness. Enable me to demonstrate the difference You make in my life, in my worship and in my conflict. In seasons of disconnect and delight I will ever trust You. Don't let me ever get used to loving poorly. Liberate my hands and my heart. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

We can praise the Lord for many things, but today's psalm leads us to worship Him for two in particular – the natural world of creation and God's perfect law of redemption. I get the picture of David looking from the palace window at the brilliant night sky or watching the sun rise over Jerusalem. C.S. Lewis thought that this psalm was one of the greatest poems ever written, and I agree. Listen to this, the skies speaking and the sun like a joyous *“bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a strong man running a race.”* It's not that David worships the sun or stars; he worships the One who created them. David then moves on to God's law. Sometimes we think of the law as something sombre and difficult, but the law actually reveals who God is. It tells us about the beautiful order that God has created and about His perfect righteousness and mercy. The Bible is perfect, flawless, truthful, and completely trustworthy. Its contents are of incredible value and are a sure foundation on which to build our lives. These qualities of God's Word bring life to us. How much do you treasure the Word of God? Answer that question, and you'll have a pretty reliable indicator of your spiritual maturity. Our proper response to all this is worship. Given that Scripture is all that the psalmist says it is, the God who authored it must be worthy of our total submission and obedience. I love this about David, in every aspect of the law he finds reason to worship. There is a challenge for us to deal with our sin, even the *“secret sins”*, the ones no one knows about. His cry is not to allow sin to have dominion over him. I love his climax to the chapter as he asks God to let what comes out of his mouth and what dwells in his heart be good, wholesome and acceptable to God.

Pray

Father, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. I praise and adore You for everything You are and for everything You've done for me. I'm thankful that every aspect of my being matters to You ... mind, body, and spirit. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

Many theologians consider Psalm 20 as being written before going into battle and Psalm 21 written coming out. If you compare the language in them you can see where this thought comes from. David and his army were in big trouble. The people and the king had come together to call on God's name in prayer and to proclaim their trust in Him. This is a 'royal' psalm, so-called because it is a prayer from the congregation of Israel asking God's blessing and protection on the king as he was entering battle. David and his army were probably faced with an army of horses and chariots, hence he defines in verse 7 where his trust lay, in God alone. This psalm reinforces an important lesson about prayer. When we pray, we call on the name of our God because He has invested His name with His power. Jesus tells us to approach the Father in His name alone (John 14:12-14). In other words, the formula "*In Jesus' name. Amen,*" is not simply a verbal device to signal the end of our prayers. It is a plea for His attention to the prayer, an acknowledgment of our dependence on Him to answer, and a declaration of our trust in Him. What a comfort to know that God's name will never fall, even when armies are brought to their knees. Others may call on their own strength or resources to save them, but we have the greatest weapon of all in prayer to our never failing God. Most of the time we don't have any problem coming up with a prayer request list. When was the last time you made a 'thank-You' list? It would be great to make one today.

Pray

Father, today I pray the prayer of the psalmist. May the LORD answer me when I am in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect me. May He send me help from the sanctuary and grant me support from Zion. May He give me the desire of my heart and make all my plans succeed. May I shout for joy over Your victory and lift up my banner in the name of my God. May the LORD grant all my requests. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

Today's psalm is one of thanksgiving and praise to God. This is also called a 'royal' psalm, for obvious reasons. David wrote it as the king of Israel, acknowledging that God had given him his throne and established his kingdom. What a list David has made here. He begins by praising God for the strength He provides. Among other things, God's strength enabled him to defeat his enemies. We need God's power for victory when it comes to dealing with the devil, as 1 Peter 5:8 reminds us he is seeking to devour us like a hungry lion. With each spiritual victory comes the joy of realising we don't have to be knocked around by sin and temptation. I love how David also thanked God for answers to prayer. When our faith has a spring-like freshness to it, it is usually evident in our prayer lives. This is not to say we can manipulate God to get what we want. David was writing as someone whose delight was in God, so his prayers reflected God's desires. It seems the further into this psalm we go, the list keeps getting better. God's presence was the joy of David's life because he understood God's unfailing love. This is God's loyal love, a term you'll run into almost every time you go to the Psalms. His love never gets old; He will never leave you or forsake you, according to Hebrews 13:5. Try it today, recall the prayers God has answered recently, the needs He has provided for, spiritual victories you have enjoyed, and last but not least, the faithful character of God Himself. Then begin thanking God for each item on your list, and I guarantee you, your faith will grow stronger.

Pray

Father, may nothing separate me from You today. Teach me how to choose only Your way so each step will lead me closer to You. Help me walk by the Word and not by my feelings. Help me to keep my heart pure and undivided. Protect me from my own careless thoughts, words, and actions. Keep me from being distracted by my wants, my desires and my thoughts on how things should be. Help me to embrace what comes my way as an opportunity to serve and worship You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

This psalm of David could be called “*The Psalm of the Cross*” as much of the suffering described in it was fulfilled literally in the crucifixion of Jesus (though it may also relate to sufferings experienced by David). The four gospel writers provide a description of Jesus' sufferings from the viewpoint of witnesses; this messianic psalm reveals His suffering from the viewpoint of Jesus Himself. The psalm begins with a cry that was uttered by Jesus on the Cross, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” (Matthew 27:46). The first half of the psalm depicts a sufferer surrounded by enemies who feels forsaken by God. As the psalmist cries out for deliverance, he also expresses hope based upon God's faithfulness in the past. At the end of the first half, the psalmist declares that God has answered him. The second half of the psalm expresses the joy of the sufferer as he praises God for hearing him and providing deliverance. He encourages all those who fear God to praise and glorify Him, confident that God's blessings will extend to many nations and to people not yet born. This is because the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations.

Here is a little breakdown if you would like to study it further:

Verses 1-2 HIS CRY.

Verses 3-5 HIS HOPE FOR DELIVERANCE.

Verses 6-8 HIS TORMENT BY OTHERS.

Verses 9-11 HIS FAITH IN GOD.

Verses 12-18 HIS SUFFERING DESCRIBED.

Verses 19-21 HIS FINAL CRY.

Verses 22-25 THE SUFFERER DELIVERED BY GOD.

Verses 26-31 WORSHIP AND PRAISE TO GOD.

Pray

Father, today I want to deepen and strengthen my faith in Jesus. It's not the size of my faith but the object of my faith that matters most, so keep revealing more of Jesus' beauty to me. May my boast be in HIS work, not mine; in HIS 'It is finished!' not in my 'I will try harder.' May the name of Jesus be the most heard, loved, and trusted name in my life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

These words and images have probably been sung, prayed, reproduced, represented, and illustrated in more ways than any other passage of Scripture. If we're not careful, these powerful verses that speak of real life can become so well known that we breeze over them and miss their power and truth. I must admit that I love the serenity of this psalm. It becomes even more majestic when we realise that the Shepherd provides cool water, green pasture, and safe passage for His sheep, and does so in spite of many threats and dangers. He promises He will be there with His guiding hand that holds the rod and staff to keep His sheep on the right path and lift a lost sheep from a crevice. Even in death He is with us. The *"valley of the shadow of death"* is the ultimate enemy, and the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26). It is interesting that this passage doesn't say we won't have any enemies, rather it declares that in the day-to-day experiences of life, we are in the presence of our enemies. Yet God keeps us safe in the face of all these threats. The opposite of rest and peace is worry and anxiety. How can we worry when verse 6 tells us that God's goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives? AND when that's done, we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Now is that cool or what? What are you worried about today? It's hard to be at peace when your heart and mind are being tossed around by fear and worry. It usually doesn't help to tell someone, *'Quit worrying.'* Lay out your fears; name your concerns. But after you have worried about them, take them to your Shepherd. Pray the promises of Psalm 23 back to Him and see if your worries look as big. Do you have a new appreciation for God's faithfulness to you today? Tell Him about it.

Pray

Father, help me today not to be pulled asunder by worry and anxiety. Your Word today says You MAKE me lie down in green pastures. You LEAD me beside still waters and You restore my soul. I feel I need all these things today, Lord. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

I turn 60 this year and have been thinking of all the changes in my lifetime. I have watched properties in our wee town change hands many times. Things can change a lot in half a century and the issue of who owns what can get complicated, but not so with God. His ownership of the earth and *“everything in it”* is not subject to change. Today’s psalm suggests two important truths for us as God’s children. First, we were created by Him; and second, we were created for Him. He has a two-fold claim on us: we are His by creation, and we are His by redemption (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Therefore, He also has first claim on our possessions. David may have written this psalm when he brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem (you can read this story in 2 Samuel 6). The greater fulfilment of this psalm will be realised when Jesus, the King of glory, returns to establish His kingdom. All human events fall short of depicting this glory, although a royal coronation is a way to shower a special person with honour and glory. The language David uses to describe the entrance of this King into heaven reflects the way a victorious king would enter Jerusalem. The doors would be thrown open and the gate through which the king was to ride into the city would be *‘lifted up’* or *‘raised’* to symbolise that the entrance wasn’t high enough to accommodate the glory of this special person. Like an earthly king who had been victorious in battle, the King of Heaven triumphed over Satan, sin, and death. Christ is still the King of Glory today and in Heaven we will be greeted by a scene more glorious than anything we could ever imagine. John’s vision of the risen and exalted Christ in Revelation 5 gives us a taste of what it will be like when we see Jesus.

Pray

Father, just as Moses prayed, *“Lord, show me Your glory,”* so my cry to You today is help me to understand You more, love You more and bask in the oceans of Your amazing love. It’s great to remember what You have done for me, but I also need to experience Your power at work in my life today. May I lift up the gates (barriers) in my life today and let the King of Glory in. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

The body is often the focal point of the world around us, with products or activities to beautify, strengthen, increase pleasure, and produce long life. But our soul is the creation of God that will outlast our physical bodies and someday inhabit the resurrection body for eternity. The Bible has many references to the soul and it is fair to say it is our connection point with God and with spiritual things. The psalmist confirms dependence on the Lord by asking for continued instruction and direction in life's walk. He waits on it *ALL DAY*. All of the failings which span our life can be removed by the boundless grace of our great God, regardless of the years covered from birth to death. Jesus said in Luke 5:32, *"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* He instructs sinners in the way of God because He is upright. If we truly understand who God is, how could we be anything but humble before Him? For those who seek His way, He returns loving kindness and truth. All of this is because of His name – the name above all names. His secret counsel is revealed to those who trust in Him and those who benefit from His covenant. Don't just look to the circumstances of today, but rather to the God of all eternity. It is lovely to know that the Lord knows all our inner struggles and anguish and He allows us to pour that all out before Him. In conclusion then, it is of utmost importance that we guard and take care of our souls (after all, we will be getting a new body). I'm not sure what you think it means to lift up your soul to God, but I think it is an emptying of the inner man truthfully before a Father who loves, cares, and understands. Try it!

Pray

Father, I lift up my soul to You because I trust in You. Keep me from shame at Your coming, so the enemies of the Cross will have no reason to celebrate. Make Your way clear to me and instruct me in that way. Lead me in Your truth and instruct me day by day. I continually and expectantly wait for You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

In today's psalm David is asking God to show him that he was safe because of his integrity. Integrity is a powerful thing and I love how David can boast of his. It makes me wonder could I do the same! David makes a distinction between himself and evil doers; he hates what they stand for while he is not claiming to be perfect (otherwise he would not need to ask for redemption and mercy). We all need God's mercy no matter how good we are. We fall far short of the righteous standard established by God. David did not know the full mechanism for this redemption. We know far more than he did concerning our redemption by God because we have knowledge of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, the act that provides for our redemption. This is the redemption and mercy about which David was praying. The Lord, in answering David's prayer, gave him the faith to believe that this redemption would come. My favourite chorus is this, *'Only by grace can we enter, only by grace can we stand. Not by our human endeavour, but by the blood of the Lamb.'* I love David's boldness in asking God to test his motives; he says, *'Put me on trial, Lord, and cross examine me.'* That is pretty daunting language and shows the powerful relationship and connection this Old Testament saint had with his God. It's absolutely beautiful. At the end of Psalm 25, David had prayed for integrity. God had apparently answered that prayer because in this psalm, David is able to come to God on the basis of that integrity. Although David may sound self-righteous in this psalm, he well knows that his righteousness is a gift from God. Today YOU and I need to walk in the same integrity and righteousness.

Pray

Father, I wait in anticipation for that magnificent day when I too will stand in the great assembly of the saints. Give me, by Your Spirit, a yearning for this day. May my life on the earth be lived in praise and in holiness, looking toward that day when You will gather me with all the saints, according to the redemption and mercy I have received through Your Son, Jesus Christ. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Read

Psalm 27

Live

As you study this psalm you will see David's source of strength and courage in difficult times and learn where to turn when persecuted by enemies or forsaken by family. This psalm is evidently written in a time of danger as we see in verse 12. It may have been prompted by the help provided by Ahimelech the priest and the opposition of Doeg the Edomite, who saw David at the Tabernacle and later reported him to Saul. You can read this story in 1 Samuel 21 and 22. This was also a time when David sought protection for his parents and family at Adullam, which may have prompted verse 10. As always, David found the Lord to be his light and salvation in dark times. The first part of the psalm expresses his confident trust in the Lord for past blessings, and his desire to dwell in the house of the Lord who will protect him in the future. It is so evident that David just loves his communion with God. The one thing he desires of the Lord is to dwell in His house all his life. In the second part, David offers an anxious plea for God's mercy and deliverance from his enemies. It ends with a confession that he would have lost heart without faith in God's goodness, and an exhortation to wait on the Lord for strength and courage of heart. Remember the word of Jesus to us in Luke 18:1 – we *'ought always to pray and not lose heart.'* Why? First, because if we grow weary and stop praying, our faith will wither. Second, we should not grow weary in prayer because *"God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us."* (Ephesians 3:20) So go on, ask something BIG today.

Pray

Here's a great prayer from Psalm 31:1-5. *'O Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in Your righteousness. Turn Your ear to me; come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since You are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of Your name lead and guide me. Free me from the trap that is set for me, for You are my refuge. Into Your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth.'*
Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

This psalm is a passionate prayer by David in a time of trouble. As in so many of David's prayers, he begins feeling desperate and ends in confidence. This is one of the blessings of passionate prayer. God speaks to our hearts even as we pray, giving us confidence that He is at work in the situation, sometimes even during the prayer itself, showing us His plan to resolve the situation. He begins with, *"To You I call, O LORD my Rock."* David expresses why he prays to God – because God is a Rock. God's faithfulness, righteousness, love, and sovereignty are timeless and unmovable. I love how he expresses his utter dependence on God in times of trouble. When we pray it is good that we realise our helplessness before God. Passionate prayer offered with the whole body – hands lifted up, eyes to the heavens – is a great way to pray. David knew that the wicked would eventually be punished, he knew of God's justice. I learned long ago that the Bible is a book of divine laws and established principles which do not change. Sowing and reaping is one of those laws and principles. God's answered prayer makes David stronger and more able to face future trials. If God answers David's prayer, then we can believe He will answer ours as well. If the Lord is David's strength and shield (verse 7), then He is also our strength (verse 8). David closes the psalm by praying for all of God's people. Let's face it, the church needs prayer. David's prayer is that God would be the shepherd of His people and carry them forever. Oh that the church would depend on God for everything, just as sheep depend upon their shepherd! In response to the last verse of today's psalm and to close your time of personal devotion, sing and worship. It can add another dimension to your walk with the Lord.

Pray

Father, thank You for constantly reminding me of Your great love for me. Help me to replicate that love to Your body every time I gather with my brothers and sisters to worship You; every time I take communion; every time I read the Scriptures; every time I listen to Your voice in creation proclaiming Your majesty and mercy. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

As a boy, David was a shepherd and poet and spent a lot of time outdoors. So it is not surprising that many of David's psalms seem to have been inspired by his witnessing God's work through His creation. Here it looks as if he has just witnessed a great thunderstorm. If you have ever witnessed one you will appreciate this reference to nature and its power. David refers to the “*mighty ones*”; some believe he is calling the angelic hosts to praise God while others (to whom I am more inclined to lean) believe he addresses the mighty ones of earth, exhorting them to give God the glory. He is talking to the rich, the powerful, the rulers and authorities of the world. The angels don't really need such exhortation, but the mighty of earth stand in dire need of it. “*The voice of Jehovah*” appears seven times in the passage – a voice which here is presented as thunder. It is not merely the thunder which David hears; Jehovah Himself is upon the waters. Imagine David sitting in a tent in the wilderness, listening to a storm approaching and hearing the voice of God in it. The power of nature is God. The thunderous voice of the storm is the voice of the Lord. We can peep through the door of the tent with David, see the brilliant flashes of lightning, hear the majestic voice of thunder and witness the mountains being moved. We do not need to fear the powerful voice of the Lord, rather see His power and take comfort that He is our God. It is He who created the heavens and the earth, and He who sustains them. It is through His power that the waves crash on the shore, the earth moves, the winds blow and seasons change. It's not just ‘mother nature’. No! Today ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

Pray

Father, I praise You for Your power, displayed so mightily in nature. May I glorify You as I ascribe all glory and strength to You. I praise You that You are my Lord and You are the all-powerful One. I praise You that You show Your power to me in nature, so that I have evidence of Your power, and so that I can be assured that my God is greater than all things. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

Today's psalm, as the title suggests, is the dedication of the temple. After a time of many military successes, David's pride got the better of him and he decided he would conduct a census of the people of Israel. We are told specifically that *"Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel."* (1 Chronicles 21) David was warned by Joab that this would be displeasing to God, but David overruled him and had him conduct the census. To discipline David for his act of pride, the Lord gave David a choice of three punishments: *'Three years of famine, three months of being swept away by his enemies ... or three days of the sword of the LORD.'* David chose the three days of plague. In the middle of the three days, the Lord *"was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, 'Enough! Withdraw your hand.'"* In response, God told David through the prophet Gad to build an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. The Lord accepted his sacrifices and answered David *"with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offerings."* Our natural reaction to discipline is to complain not to praise, so we need to take heed of David's response here. He compares times of God's discipline with His times of blessing. God's discipline is for our good as He disciplines us because He loves us, just as a loving parent disciplines his children because he loves them. A census was meant to emphasise the fact that everyone owes his existence to God, but David's census was not performed to glorify God, it was to glorify himself. God looks not only at actions, but also motives; not just the hands, but the heart too. What do you want God to change in your life? What do you know He needs to change? We serve a God who transforms weeping into dancing.

Pray

Father, I've thought, said, and done a lot of things about which I am truly ashamed. Shame is a thief, one that robs me of dignity, freedom, and joy. Jesus, You're the only one who can break the power of my shame because You have completely broken the condemning power of my guilt. I praise You for doing everything necessary to deal with the ways I have been both an agent and a victim of sin. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

This is a psalm about trusting in the Lord. Though David speaks of great affliction and anguish, he does so against a backdrop of trust that the Lord will preserve him. David expects to be rescued in his battle, expects guidance from the Lord, expects deliverance from future attacks of his enemies, expects redemption from sin – all because the Lord is his refuge. It appears that David here is praying concerning an ongoing struggle, for he first expresses his appreciation for the fact that, to this point, God has blessed him and kept his enemies at bay. Then there is a shift and many theologians think that the occasion of writing was the one described in 2 Samuel 15. In that chapter, Absalom, David's son, slandered David to try and turn the people away from him. Absalom largely succeeded in this, evidenced by the fact that Ahithophel (formerly a counsellor of David) joined Absalom's camp. David, as a result of increasing disfavour among the people, was forced to flee Jerusalem. It is sad that in spite of David's great accomplishments and all he had done for the nation of Israel, the people were so ready to believe Absalom's slander and turn against David. We see this attitude today also. So many people are willing to believe gossip and slander, and so few are willing to seek after the truth. Despite his emotional anguish, David realised that the Lord was in control. So-called 'fate' has nothing to do with our destiny. Our times are in the hands of God. Everything works to His purpose, nothing is random. If we feel pain, it is by His approval. If we experience gladness, it comes from Him. The psalm ends with praise: *"Praise be to the LORD, for He showed His wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city."* Answered prayer must always be followed by praise to the Lord – always remember this!

Pray

Father, how great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You, which You bestow on those who take refuge in You. In the shelter of Your Presence You hide them from the intrigues of men; in Your dwelling You keep them safe from accusing tongues. Thank You for Your love. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

This psalm fulfils a promise of David's that he made in Psalm 51 (which strangely enough was most certainly written before this one). It is a prayer to God for forgiveness for his sin with Bathsheba. David, smarting under guilt for his sin, asked God in Psalm 51:12 *"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation."* Many people struggle in the area of forgiveness as we all fall short of true righteousness, but praise God that His love for us wins through. All true and lasting happiness comes from God's forgiveness of our sins. How can the man who is not at peace with his Maker be blessed in life? We are all guilty of this at one time or another. We all have sins that we commit over and over and are so reluctant to bring them before God because we want to continue in them. We do not want to acknowledge them as sin because then we cannot with a clear conscience continue in them. Praise God that He seeks to remedy this in His people through the work of His Spirit via our conscience. The change in David's life after confessing his sin was evident from the way he viewed God. We are forgiven by God not so we may follow our own lusts again, but that we may change and be obedient to God. God Himself helps us in this. God promises guidance to those who turn to Him. How could we go wrong with the Lord of the Universe guiding our steps? He promises guidance in four ways: He instructs, teaches, counsels, and watches over us. David concludes the psalm with a call to praise the Lord for His forgiveness. Forgiveness of sin is the source of all God's blessing and the greatest manifestation of His love for us. Choose to be obedient to your King. Choose to follow the instruction and counsel of God. Is there something secret you need to own up to God today?

Pray

Father, I rejoice and praise You for Your forgiveness of sins. I praise You that You have provided a way that I may seek Your forgiveness, through confession of my sins to You. And I praise You that You have provided a means for the forgiveness of my sins through Jesus' work on the Cross. May I walk freely in this today in Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

It is easy to praise the Lord when things are going well; it is far more difficult to do it in times of desperation or danger. But it may be more important to praise the Lord in the difficult times than in the good. It is in the time of difficulty that we need to rehearse who God is, what God is like, and what God has done in the past. It will strengthen our faith for the current crisis. The psalmist may have been facing the danger of war, and perhaps related to it the lack of food in a famine, but he praises the Lord for His character and His works throughout history. I love the fact that the writer bears no resentment to man or to God, nor should we. We are given no clue who the author of this psalm is; this one along with Psalms 1, 2, and 10 are the only psalms in Book 1 that have no title or inscription. The occasion for the psalm is equally unclear, but the writer calls upon the righteous to praise the Lord because they can trust in Him for salvation, knowing that His Word is true, His sovereign works are faithful, His judgment is righteous, and His loyal love to those who trust in Him is eternal. The psalmist calls upon the righteous to praise the Lord anew with musical accompaniment, shouts of joy and a new song. I like this a lot. He declares and demonstrates the certainty and clarity of the Word of the Lord. I love this demonstration of the Lord creating everything by His Word. It is the loyal love of the Lord that saves and preserves the lives of those who trust in Him. Allow the love that sent Jesus to the Cross and the power that raised Him from the dead to continue to heal and change you today. Don't be godless in attitude, but grace-full in heart, and be free even from resenting other people's resentment.

Pray

Father, whether it's thoughtless words spoken by a friend or a traffic jam when I'm running late; the empty milk carton when I want my cereal or the foolish decision of the government – there is nothing as destructive as bitterness. Please forgive me Lord and give me a thankful heart. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

According to the inscription, this event occurred after David first fled from Saul who was trying to murder him. You can read about this in 1 Samuel 21. David fled to Gath where he was recognised when he went before king Achish. David sensed this recognition of him could bring danger, so, as a ploy, he acted insane. Achish was revolted by this behaviour and sent David away. This psalm was written in praise of the Lord's deliverance of David in that situation. We can never praise the Lord enough. Indeed, praise of the Lord is never completed. I am sometimes amazed that the Lord of the Universe even accepts our meagre attempts at praise. God is gracious in that He hears and answers even our spur-of-the-moment prayers. I'm sure we all have prayed such prayers when we have found ourselves unexpectedly in a sticky situation. It is comforting that we have tons of examples in the Bible of God answering such prayers. David uses the rest of this psalm for teaching: *"Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord."* David was maybe being general in saying *"my children"*, but I'm going to believe he meant literally. The importance of teaching children about the things of the Lord cannot be stressed enough. The ministry of teaching children is so important. Far too many churches relegate the job of teaching children to anyone who will volunteer. Emphasis is put on supervisory and policing skills rather than the ability to communicate God's truth. The Sunday school teacher should love children, love the Lord, know the Bible, and have a great desire to teach God's truths lovingly and accurately to children. I love that the psalmist ends with telling how the Lord is near to the broken-hearted. He does not say that God will spare us broken hearts, but rather He will be near us and even rescue us from a crushed spirit. This is a blessed hope to every believer. He bears our griefs and carries our sorrows!

Pray

Father, I praise You for the redemption that You have provided for me. I was lost, my soul was bankrupt, my life meant nothing, but You redeemed me and gave my life meaning that will last throughout eternity. For that I shout Your praise. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

Today David's psalm seems to be about his flight from Saul (read I Samuel 24). David's adversaries have opposed him so he asks the Lord of the universe to take up the cause of His people. I love the confidence he has in God, "*Draw spear and javelin against those who pursue me.*" He also asks for peace of mind and I love the fact that God speaks to our souls. He speaks to us concerning His salvation in many ways – through people, through His Word, through His Son, through His works, and even through His own voice directly to our hearts. David promises that, once he is delivered, he will praise the Lord for his deliverance. David will rejoice not in the punishment of his enemies, but in his own deliverance and salvation. The treatment by his enemies is similar to the treatment Jesus suffered from those He came to save. For the good David did – in killing Goliath, slaying his ten thousands of Philistines, and thereby saving his king and country – Saul and his men envied him, and sought to slay him. So Jesus, for all the good He did for those He came to save – by healing their diseases, and preaching the gospel to them for their redemption – was rewarded with reproaches and persecutions, and at last with the shameful death of the Cross. In the final section of the psalm, David emphasises vindication in his prayer to God. Questions today: why did David, who was righteous in the situation, face persecution? Why did God not intervene immediately on David's behalf, before he experienced affliction? In general, why does God who is in control of all things allow His people to face persecution and affliction? I love Joseph's answer to such a question in Genesis 50:20 – "*you meant it for evil but God meant it for good.*" When triumph comes, He is God; and when trial comes, God is still good. Think today about how you pray for those who have hurt you. Is there a situation you've prayed for that God has remained silent in? What can you learn about yourself today in that situation?

Pray

Father, I praise You that You do not send affliction and persecution as a whim, but for my good, for my growth and to improve my relationship with You. I praise You for Your righteousness. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

Today's psalm starts with a warning to be wary of anyone who has no fear of God, as they are capable of anything. One of the great weaknesses in our society is that children are not taught to fear God. The person who is blind to his own sinfulness cannot be trusted for anything at all. This is someone who does not just stumble into sin, rather, plans ahead of time to sin. We must instead resolve to think ahead of how we can avoid sin. We must steer clear of places and situations in which we face temptation. This is the best way to keep from stumbling. What a blessing that God's care extends to all. We don't need fame, wealth or power to be valuable in God's eyes. He loves us all, and values us all equally. We can be influenced or threatened by the culture around us, but it may be more difficult to resist our own temptations, rather than the variety of subtle threats that come from other people, no matter how frightening some of those outside threats may be. Though we are not immune from the evil deeds of those who reject the Lord, we are secure in His eternal love. They, however, will be cast down, and their final condition will be far worse than any we could suffer in this physical life. We must allow His perfect love to cast out all our fears as we await the upward call to be with the Lord where there will be no more pain or sorrow, as the former things are passed away. Today think especially about the fountain of life in you. As you consider the source and the location of that fountain, it will help you to appreciate the transformation the Lord produces within our hearts and minds. We who have received the gift of eternal life would still be among those rejecting the gift, except for the grace and mercy shown to us by our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus.

Pray

Father, I need Your strength to keep my heart fixed on the unshakable truth of Your love for me as Your child. As I regularly spend time reading Your Word, remind me often of that fountain of life that only You provide. I love that I am most assuredly Your child. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

According to verse 25, David is now an old man. This psalm, while it reflects the personal experiences of David and contains the king's own pleas to God, has a great deal of relevance to us today. David clearly reminds us that God is aware of the injustice in this world and cares about it. He also reminds us that if we are patient, God will eventually act to turn the tables on the wicked. The main message can be found in the first eleven verses with the remainder of the psalm offering specific evidence to support his claims. It opens with an immediate plea for the righteous not to fret. The writer is reminding his audience that they should not worry when they see the apparent success of the wicked. David is clearly stating that allowing ourselves to worry over the success of the wicked can cause corrosion in our own lives. He reminds us of the promise God has made to all His children that they will be rewarded if they delight and trust in the Lord. He says we must *"Be still in the Lord and wait patiently for Him."* Lord, give me patience, but can I have it NOW! God has promised that the wicked will eventually be dealt with and the righteous will inherit the land. This image is so important because it immediately reminds us that God is the Creator and is in full control. We are also reminded that it is God who is in control of the process of punishing the wicked just as He controls the greenery He has created. Much like Job struggling with the concept of suffering and Psalm 73 asking why the wicked have no struggles, there is a hint of scepticism here in Psalm 37. At times, the writer seems to be trying to convince himself that God is in control. Today carry this reassurance in your heart – our God reigns.

Pray

Father, please free me so I can be less irritated, less often, with fewer people. Please turn my trigger reactions into slower, wiser responses. Help me use fewer words and listen more when engaging with others. And above all, keep my spiritual antenna raised to heaven. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
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Live

This is the third of what many call the ‘penitential psalms’. This is because they express remorse for sin. The inscription calls this a psalm of David, “*to bring to remembrance*”. Most times, the consequences of sin are the natural results of the sin itself and not due to a special manifestation of God’s discipline. Sometimes, like here with David, God specifically disciplines us for our sins. As the writer to the Hebrews says in 12:7, “*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?*” Through all this, note that David never once says the discipline is unjust. When under the discipline of God, we can never shout to God, ‘I don’t deserve this!’ However, as children of a loving God, we can appeal to His mercy to alleviate the sting. David is speechless before God. He is well aware that God knows what he wants before he asks and he is just groaning, which God hears. I love this! Not only do David’s friends desert him, but his enemies look for an opportunity to take advantage of his wounded state. David closes the psalm with some final requests. Note that David’s prayer has not yet been answered. This is fairly rare in the Psalms as many that are prayers begin with petitions and end with thanksgiving for the answers. In this psalm, David is still seeking the Lord to answer his prayer. At times, answers to our prayers come quickly, before we even expect them. More often, answers to our prayers come later than we expect. We must not limit the Lord, asking Him to give us comfort and deliverance when we think we have greatest need of it; we must leave our prayer at His feet. God hears us and He will answer our prayers in His time and in His way. Maybe you’ve felt the chastening hand of God and have stood speechless like David before Him. Today is a good day to bask in the love of God and allow Him to love on you.

Pray

Father, no one speaks life with their words like You. There’s no wiser tongue than Yours. No one is more filled with kindness and gentle answers than You. You don’t have any insecurities, and You love me unconditionally. I love You. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

What should we make of this psalm? I don't really share two aspects of the psalmist's faith – I don't believe that pain or illness is a punishment from God due to our sin (though obviously our actions can have moral and physical consequences) and I don't believe that we all simply cease to exist forever. It is obvious that the psalmist is having a down day and his perspectives on faith, due to some increased stress or distress, are a little miscued. The psalmist also confronts us with some harsh truths – life does indeed have a lot of pain and unjust suffering. How do we square this experience with a God whom we claim to be good and all-powerful? Are the wicked right after all? Does God really care? This continues to be one of the central challenges for those who trust in God's faithfulness. The psalmist is right about the brevity of life. We're just a puff of smoke in this universe; we are God's guests in this life, but we're just passing through. He elaborates on the shortness and seeming meaninglessness of life and the last half of verse 6 in particular focuses on the pointlessness of all we do. These verses sound a lot like what we read in the book of Ecclesiastes. There is a bit of tension in that he wants God to hear him, but he also wants God to turn away from him or maybe to stop punishing him. It's the tension of 'listen to me!' and 'leave me alone!' We humans really are weird and peculiar beings! Maybe today you need to ask the Lord, like the psalmist did, to, *"deliver me from all my transgressions, for they are many and You Lord alone can deliver."* It would be good to tell the Lord that you desire citizenship in heaven rather than anywhere else in this entire world where you are now a stranger. Place all your hope in Him today.

Pray

Father, today I am reminded that my days are as short as just a handbreadth or like a morning vapour gone before mid-day. A life that is filled with the most prized worldly treasure is a shadow, and even reaching the highest pinnacle of achievement among men is emptiness before You, Lord. You are my quest and greatest desire, Lord. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

When we read the inscription "*To the chief musician*" we should take special note. Any psalm with direct reference to Christ is known as a 'Messianic' psalm. Knowing this, this psalm takes on a whole new meaning for us. Rather than just being a psalm about the experience of someone in distress, it becomes a psalm about the history of God's plan of salvation for mankind by chronicling the experiences of Jesus Himself. Jesus here looks back on His suffering. I really thank God that Jesus "*waited patiently*" in His trials. After meditating on God's plan of salvation, it is natural and appropriate to next meditate on the greatness of God. Jesus goes beyond just meditating though; He proclaims God's greatness and we shouldn't ever hold back in proclaiming it as well. To end the psalm, we are taken back to the Cross as Jesus prays to His Father for deliverance. In this prayer, we are given insight into Jesus' horrific sufferings; He is burdened by sin and we know that it is not His own sin because He was the sinless Saviour. I often think we might be able to imagine the physical pain of the Cross depicted in movies like 'The Passion of the Christ', however, we can never imagine the spiritual pain and loss that Christ suffered on the Cross as He, the sinless One, bore the spiritual weight of all our sins. The gift of His life for us was the greatest gift ever offered, yet some still defiantly reject this gift. How tragic. Interesting to note also that being a believer does not automatically eliminate suffering and pain in a fallen world. The psalmist confesses that he recognises his own sins to be so innumerable that he is unable to look up, and his heart fails within him. May God create a greater sensitivity within us that brings conviction in our heart each time we give in to personal sin.

Pray

Father, I want to be a person who loves and worships You simply because You are God – when life is easy or life is hard; when You're showing up or remaining silent. Father, there's no other god *besides* You, and there's certainly no other god *like* You. I'm very grateful for Your gifts, but I want to love and worship You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
What is God saying to me?

REFLECT & RESPOND
What am I going to do about it?

Live

David lists specifically the blessings God shows to those who help others. David finds himself in need here, however, the root cause of David's trouble was not some enemy, nor did a chance misfortune befall him, nor was he downed by a wayward virus, rather, the cause of David's affliction was his sin against God. David, to receive atonement for his sins, was required to offer sacrifices in the temple. I am so thankful I live under a new and much better covenant – the blood of Jesus Christ which takes away the sin of the world, my sin! When the king is sick, the whispering starts. One test of true friendship is the reaction of your friends when you are afflicted. Likewise, a true sign of an enemy and of hatred is when one takes delight in the sickness of others. It seems that David could not find any true friends in his time of sickness. Even those who visited him under the guise of comforting him dealt wrongly with him. Verse 13 is a benediction to the entire first book of psalms, which consists of Psalm 1 through to 41. In these psalms, we have travelled with David from the depths of the grave to the heights of heaven. David experienced a wide range of situations and emotions, and these are documented well in these psalms. Because of David's wide range of experience, we are taught, edified, blessed, uplifted, and comforted by the psalms he wrote in response. I'm sure that David did not necessarily enjoy his wide range of experience as he endured his difficult times, but all the same, David could exclaim: *"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen."* Today is a good day to show mercy and favour to those around you – not because they deserve it, but because you have been shown mercy upon mercy by none other than the King of kings. Now that inspires me!

Pray

Father, You are the one Who refreshes a dry and weary heart. Your mercies are new every morning, and Your steadfast love never comes to an end. Great is Your faithfulness. No one gives more freely than You do, Lord Jesus. Freely I receive from You today; freely I will give. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT & RESPOND
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