



**PSALMS 90-106
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

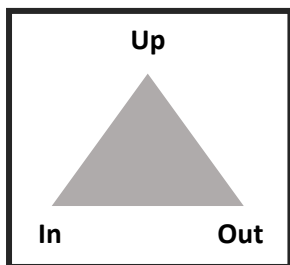
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate 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: BOOK 4

Today we enter the fourth book of Psalms: 90 to 106. These 17 songs are anonymous except for Psalm 90 (written by Moses) and Psalms 101 and 103 (written by David and composed for public worship).

I need to say that it is uncertain why Psalms is divided into five books. The division is not based on authorship or chronology; several authors are included, and their individual songs are mixed throughout the various collections. Some sources, including Jewish Midrash traditions, suggest the five-fold division is based on the five books of the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy). If this is the case, and I do believe it is, then this section of Psalms, book 4, relates to the book of Numbers. These psalms frequently highlight Israel's failure and their time spent in the wilderness, echoing the theme of Numbers. The book of Numbers also deals with Israel's relationship to other nations.

So, Bible and devotional at the ready, coffee (or water) brewed. Let's go!
Phil

Read

Psalm 90

Live

This is often referred to as ‘the wisdom psalm’. It focuses a lot on human frailty and the brevity of life. The introduction declares confidence in God as Protector of His people and is all about the steadfastness and faithfulness of God who is from everlasting to everlasting. I love this! This psalm was written by Moses and is most likely the oldest of all the psalms. It’s particularly powerful as it provides insight into how Moses personally viewed the historical situations documented elsewhere in Scripture, revealing his concern that the right lessons be not just learned, but also applied. I love how Moses appeals to us to embrace the considerable contrast between the eternal character of God and man’s limited opportunity to connect with Him. Every second is precious and a resource not to be squandered on the pursuit of anything else but His will and ways.

Death is not a popular subject and we live in a society characterised by the denial of death, which the Bible declares to be unnatural. In every century except our own, preparing for a good death has been an accepted goal in life. Psalm 90 has been part of that preparation for millions of Christians. The psalmist Moses talks about God’s anger over sin. He also talks about the brevity of one’s life. Moses reminds us that we should all fear the Lord in a reverential way, after all, He is God. Death sets a limit to our lives and should stimulate some kind of reflection on eternity. Hebrews 2:9 reminds us that the Lord Jesus actually tasted death for every man. I think this is beautiful. Our Saviour and Lord has gone before us and He knows the passage that will take us to eternal life with Him, if He hasn’t returned. The Salvation Army, when speaking of death, uses the lovely phrase, ‘Promoted to glory’.

Pray

Father, I’d love to be so smitten with You that hearing Your name exalted would put a bigger smile on my heart than hearing my name mentioned. I’d love to be gladder when You’re being magnified, than sad when I’m being marginalised. I’d love to experience greater grief when people don’t understand You, than when they don’t understand me. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

One of the things I love about this psalm is its use of different titles for God. ‘Most High’ in Hebrew is Elyon; it means *lofty, elevation, supreme*. ‘Most High’ denotes God’s supreme authority over all other authorities. ‘Almighty’ in Hebrew is Shaddai. It means *most powerful*, denoting that there is no power greater than God in the whole universe. ‘LORD’ is written in Hebrew as YHWH, and most scholars would agree that it is pronounced Yahweh. YHWH literally means *the Self-Existent / Eternal One*. The name Yahweh implies the eternal nature of God. He is outside the physical realm, not limited by time, space, or matter! Yahweh has no beginning or end. ‘God’ comes from the Hebrew word Elohim, meaning *God in plurality*.

The writer opens with beauty and splendour for the believer, *“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.”* The word *“dwell”* or *“abide”* means *to take up permanent residence in*. The psalmist reminds us to stay in His presence, for it’s a permanent place of living. If we do that, we will rest in the very shadow of the Almighty. Shadows are places of protection or covering; they provide relief from the direct heat of the sun. If the heat is severe, we run to the shade. Shade diminishes the intensity of heat. The writer goes on to talk about the security, privilege, and power that is ours when we abide in this place. The word *“abide”* means *to be stuck fast and unmovable*, and declares that nothing and no-one is a match for you when you’re there.

Psalm 91 glows with testimony to the security of godly worshippers. When this worshipper calls on God, God says, *“I WILL answer”*. Note also in this psalm that verses 11 and 12 are the words quoted by Satan to Jesus during the temptation in the wilderness.

Pray

Father, thank You for Your presence with me. Thank You for Your Almighty Shadow. Thank You that You go before me and cover me from behind. Thank You that You are here with me, right now, and that my future is secure in the place You’re preparing for me. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

In this lovely wee chapter the writer looks at four things: the majesty of God, the stupidity of man, himself, and the righteous. The first five verses are true to the title, *“A song for the Sabbath”*. They speak of God’s steadfast love in the morning and His faithfulness at night. My mum and I used to chat about this chapter, the greatness of God and the depth of His thoughts. The writer then shifts the spotlight to mankind and the stupidity of those who disregard God. They are doomed to destruction forever, he says. Not much of a future for them, eh? When he writes of himself, the psalmist says he has been exalted by God like the horn of a wild ox. The horn speaks of strength as it was all the animal had to defend itself. He also declares, *“You have poured over me fresh oil”*. If there is one prayer I will pray today it is this, ‘Father God, pour over me fresh oil!’ He writes how the godly flourish like a palm tree and grow strong like a cedar in Lebanon, trees that were known across the world for their size and strength. These people love their God.

I’m so thankful that it’s God’s grasp of us and not our grasp of Him that defines a life lived for Him. Sometimes we can lift our hands in awe and gratitude for the way He loves us. Sometimes we can shake our fist at heaven like a pouting, demanding child. Sometimes we can wring our hands in anxious unbelief, like a helpless orphan. But we live, and we will die, secure in His palms, confident that we are written upon His heart, ever beloved and betrothed to Him. We never earned our way into a relationship with God, and we don’t maintain a relationship with Him by our striving works either. It’s all for the praise of God’s glory and my eternal good!

Pray

Father, this one thing I want: to know You more than anything else, because it affects everything else. Renew and refresh, deepen and expand, stretch and broaden my relationship with You. I want to experience more of the power of Your resurrection, power to know more of Your love, power to love others as You love me, power to live in Your story. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This psalm has no title to tell us what it is about, but some commentators think it is about creation, describing what God did in Genesis 1 when He made the waters of the sea separate from dry land. Other theologians tell us that the word in verse 3 is “*rivers*”, not “*waters*” or “*floods*” and they say this implies the rivers Euphrates, Nile, and Tigris. God was always King but His people demanded a king so they could be like all the other nations. So He gave them kings: Saul, David, Solomon, and many others. The problem was that many of them were evil and did not rule well, so God let foreign kings destroy them. These foreign kings came from Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon – where you find the rivers Euphrates, Nile, and Tigris. When verse 3 says “*the rivers rose up*”, it may refer to these countries that would destroy Israel and Judah and take them into exile. Exile ended in 538 BC when the Jews went back to their own country. God destroyed Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon because, as verse 4 reminds us, He is more powerful than all these waters. With no earthly king, God then became their king again.

Whether this psalm is about creation or exile or has another meaning, one thing can be assured: whatever happens, God is still Creator and King over everything! We must remember this when bad things happen. In God are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is Wonderful Counsellor, the One we can look to for knowledge of great mysteries and insight into things eternal. He is also the One to whom we can look for counsel on loving our family well, handling fresh disappointments, old hurts, and unfulfilled longings. He cares about everything. He upholds all things by the power of His eternal Word, and we get to call Him ‘Abba Father’, ‘Daddy God’. How beautiful and cool is that!

Pray

Father, You are Mighty God, the One who created and sustains the entire universe, the One in whom all things are being summed up. You’re also the One who gives me power to humble myself when I’d rather stay proud, and strength to boast in my weaknesses when I’d rather be self-sufficient. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Psalm 94

Live

This is a great psalm on teaching how to deal with anger. I love this psalm as I, like you, have to deal with anger. The psalmist addresses God as the Judge and the One who avenges. In pleading his case before God, he pours out a rant of what the wicked have done, followed by some statements about the greatness of God. Verse 16 captures the question the psalmist is wrestling with, *“Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?”* He expresses himself in vulnerable terms and, in accordance with many of the psalmists, he raises the banner of worship and the greatness of his God who he trusts, declaring He is the Rock of his refuge.

This psalm models several really simple ways we can behave when we are angry. It models honesty with ourselves and with God, stating our case to God, acknowledging our vulnerability, trusting God's care, and letting God take care of justice. Do you ever think about how we get it the wrong way around? If only we could become more preoccupied with the treasure within than with the pressures without. Let's face it, friends, God's incomparable beauty is most clearly revealed through our hardships when we surrender to His ways. God's redeeming purposes will be most fully realised through our brokenness, which we should surrender to Him with joy.

This psalm is one of the psalms that can help us speak freely to God about our anger. The psalmist concludes with a declaration that God will take care of justice; He will judge. Unjust leaders can claim that God is on their side, but it is not true because their actions do not reflect the character of God. Justice will eventually come and God will give us relief from our sorrows. When you wonder who is for you, the answer is this: there is no one to deliver except God. He is the only deliverer to rely upon and unless the Lord helps, we would be nothing. When our minds fill with doubt, as they certainly do, we must turn to God.

Pray

Father, You alone give the words of life, the sufficient grace, and the hope of glory. May Your voice be ten times louder than the murmurings around me and the grumblings inside me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Psalm 95

Live

Here we have a beautiful section of worship to the Rock of our salvation, a great God and a great King. There is a unique invitation into His presence to worship, kneel, and bow down. This psalm, like many others, challenges me because the psalmist records the prophetic voice of God to rebellious and hard hearts. We are asked to not allow our hearts to harden. This is an incredible prayer. Sometimes God gives us the consequences of our choices; other times He spares us the punishment our hardheartedness deserves. That is an act of His mercy for which this psalmist, and all believers, can give thanks.

This psalm acknowledges God as Lord of the earth and Shepherd King of His people. Meribah and Massah are places where the Israelites rebelled in the desert and tested the Lord concerning whether He was with them or not. The writer reflects upon these times when the Israelites put God to the test and ended up missing out on God's rest.

Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to believe and experience the transforming truths and oceans of delight offered in relationship with God. We need Him to rescue us from our unbelief, to dethrone our false notions of God and the gospel, and to soften our hard hearts. It's one thing to rest in Jesus' finished work, but it's another thing to be alive to His present desire. Find a place where you can go to enjoy peace and serenity. Rest from your labours and listen to God. Whatever the past or present state of your relationship with Him, this psalm invites you to come into God's presence today. Try kneeling in His presence, acknowledging Him as Lord of your life, even during those times you have strayed. Imagine life for you without God's promised rest. Think about those times in your past when your heart strayed from God's ways and how God brought you back to Himself. As you listen to God's voice *today*, what is He saying to you?

Pray

Father, my heart yearns for You in a fresh and new way today. Come, fill me with Your promised Holy Spirit that was poured out long ago and is still as powerful as ever. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This is another little praise psalm that calls us to see the absolute holiness of our God. Splendour and majesty are before Him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. When you read psalms like this one, you cannot but be reminded of the awesomeness of our God. May we never take Him for granted or run into His presence glibly. We are reminded today that sometimes nature has more sense than us humans; the psalmist says that nature reveres God. I think of Jesus when He was on earth. When His own people did not receive Him, even nature and demons knew Him. Fish swam up and gave Him money, waves and winds obeyed His command.

I love the little section in the middle of this psalm that tells us to ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name. The writer is telling us about the content of our worship and what we need to give to the Lord: recognise His strength and praise Him for those attributes; bring an offering and make your sacrifice to God; worship the Lord in the splendour of holiness; come before Him trembling as you honour His greatness; give God glory and honour as you recognise His glory and greatness. The psalmist gives us a beautiful picture of the heart of worship. Our singing to the Lord is an excellent expression of thankfulness and appreciation for our Lord, even if it's just a joyful noise!

The writer concludes with imagery of the coming of the Lord to judge. All creation is again called to rejoice and worship the Lord. Everyone is to exalt the Lord because He is coming to judge the earth. I love how He will judge in righteousness and in His faithfulness. I also love how the psalmist pictures the coming of the Judge as something to anticipate eagerly. Praise God that He will judge in the earth in righteousness. Everything will be put back to right and justice will prevail.

Pray

Father, You took all the guilt and all the shame of my sin on the cross. I really want to experience it more fully, more deeply. You're the only One who can make me holy, for You are my wisdom, my righteousness, my holiness, and my redemption. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Psalm 97

Live

The next couple of psalms are all about praise and when you skim read them, this all seems nice enough and easy to do. The problem is when we start to really think about bombs, wars, tsunamis, earthquakes, and losing our loved ones way too early. The writer says, *“The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice.”* Does the Lord reign over famine, starvation, and deadly diseases? What about the issue that arose at work last week or the job loss at the factory? This brings praise into a new light. The writer just expects us to rejoice, no matter what. We all have reason to rejoice in Christ's government because there is a depth in His counsel, which we must not pretend to fathom. People who love the Lord may well rejoice and be glad because He is glorified. Whatever will bring Him honour should bring God's people pleasure.

I love how the Lord preserves the souls of His people under their greatest trial. He says He will deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one and preserve them safe to His heavenly kingdom. Those who rejoice in Christ Jesus have fountains of joy prepared for them.

In the first part of this psalm, the glory of God is revealed. We are told that God is hidden in the mystery of clouds and thick darkness, while irresistible fire proceeds Him, and lightning and thunder manifest His power. The second part shows how nature and human beings respond to the revealing of God's glory. Nature's response is simple: the heavens proclaim God's righteousness. But among human beings, the response is mixed. The writer admits that not all people worship God and so when God's glory is revealed, those who worship idols are ashamed as even the idols bow down before the one true God! The closing part of the psalm sounds like wisdom from Proverbs. It speaks to the question, 'How do God's people live in a world where not everyone recognises God's rule?' God loves, guards, and rescues them.

Pray

Father, there is no scaling Your heights or plummeting to Your depths. Your wisdom is unreachable, and Your love is unmatchable. That You chose me before You even planned earth's foundations baffles me beyond words. But thank You, I'm so glad You did. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This psalm is one of seven that were used at a festival to celebrate God as King (the others are Psalm 47, 93, 95, 96, 97, and 99). Theologians refer to these as the ‘enthronement psalms’. I have to admit I love these; they are special to me. Most of these psalms have the statement, *“The Lord is king”*. You should mark them out as special because they are beautiful.

The heading today, *“A Psalm”* (by the way, no other psalm has this title), designates this as a musical piece suitable for use in worship. When I was a boy, I used to sing this psalm. While it calls for instrumental accompaniment with both stringed and brass instruments, I couldn’t play either, but I could make a joyful noise unto the Lord! The psalm divides into three parts: Praise to the Lord because of mighty deeds in the past. Praise to the Lord the ruling King in the present. And a call to nature to also praise the Lord, the One who will come to set things right in the world.

When I was at school, I loved history, and psalms like this one make us look back at history. *“Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvellous things!”* He brought His people out of bondage, He redeemed them and blessed them. He sent His Son to die on a cross for our sins. He sent the promised Holy Spirit on Pentecost to fill us and indwell us daily. Need I go on?

I’m not sure, but I imagine these psalms must have been written on the occasion of a great national triumph. I also have a notion that they will be taken up to glory and used when He returns to set up His kingdom. How cool is that thought! At that time, salvation and righteousness will be made clear in the sight of the hostile nations. Let’s give thanks today for the victories of God in judgment and in mercy, for the triumphs of Christ on the cross, and for the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

Pray

Father, You are high above all others and there is no one like You in all the earth. Thank You for Jesus, thank You for the cross, thank You for the promised Holy Spirit. Come now and fill me afresh. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Another powerful psalm today with three mentions of “*God is holy*” which I don’t want you to miss (verses 3, 5, and 9). The Hebrew ‘qadosh’ simply means ‘set apart’ or ‘separate’. The emphasis is on the Lord’s might, the fact that He is different than anything or anyone else. I often think that in our preaching and trying to make God relevant today, we have portrayed Him way too small. He is huge, He rules and reigns the universe and He is not just a big one of us. He is God, Yahweh, holy is His name.

God is imagined as enthroned in the heavens! The people’s reaction is to tremble in awe and wonder, and to praise. The cherubim were part of the decorations of the Lord’s throne in the temple. In the psalmist’s eye, they are winged creatures around the heavenly throne. I sometimes read these psalms and then close my eyes and try to get caught up in their splendour and majesty. Heaven is a beautiful, holy place with such might and power present that our little human minds struggle to take it in.

Could it be that the modern church is infatuated with the love of God and embarrassed at His holiness? We are more enamoured with the therapeutic “uses” of God to provide us with inner peace, than we are with the fact that He is holy and, therefore, we must be holy. Let’s aim at getting a bigger view of God in His majesty and holiness, and a more biblically accurate view of ourselves. Seeing God in His majesty and holiness will cause you to see yourself as one in need of His grace. Let’s aim at increasing personal holiness on the heart level. Judge and cut off every sinful thought the instant it pops into your mind. Don’t tolerate so-called ‘little’ sins as if they don’t matter. Don’t justify yourself with the consolation that everyone does it. Let’s aim at meeting alone with God every day to exalt Him and worship at His footstool. Call upon Him in prayer and remember, “*God is holy.*”

Pray

Father, we read today of such beauty and wonder, and yet Your Word reminds me that no eye has seen or ear heard the things that You have stored up for those who love You. What a day that is going to be when faith gives way to sight, beholding all we have tried to see. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This is a beautiful little psalm which has become a prototype of worship down through the ages. A spiritual protocol must be followed by whoever wants to enter into the presence of the King. Psalm 100 shows us the pathway, as it were, into God's presence, a procession as if to visit a dignitary or a protocol as if to visit a king. This psalm seems to be modelling from the tabernacle of Moses and the instructions are wise for us to still follow today. Look at the model for entering His presence: come into His presence with singing; understand who we are and who God is (we are the sheep, He is the Shepherd and we can graze in His pasture!); enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. We do all this because He is good, His steadfast love endures forever and His faithfulness is to all generations. I think this is a pretty cool psalm!

It is said of Scripture that it is shallow enough that the youngest and most feeble may not drown, but deep enough that the strongest and most mature will never reach the bottom. That's what this psalm is, depth and wonder unimagined. I noticed lately when a member of the royal family was over in Belfast, people stood in line, waiting for hours to catch a glimpse. It was a cold day and yet people braved the elements just to catch a look. Yet, here we are today, invited to run into the presence of the living God.

What really is worship, in this specific sense of praise and adoration? The Puritan Stephen Charnock called it *"nothing else but rendering to God the honour that is due Him."* A.W. Tozer gave a more expanded meaning; he said that God *"wants to cultivate within us the adoration and admiration of which He is worthy. He wants us to be astonished at the inconceivable elevation and magnitude and splendour of Almighty God."* I often think in terms of horizontal or vertical worship – songs about us, like "We are a people of power" or songs about Him, "I exalt thee". The latter is by far the best.

Pray

Father, absolutely *nothing* can separate me from Your love. That's why it's not hard to worship You, for there is no one who has loved me like You do. That's why I love You, because You first loved me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This is one of two psalms in this section penned by David. It talks to us about integrity. These are the words of a king and ruler who has decided to walk with integrity of heart and is enforcing it upon his reign and domain. This is the guy who made many slips, including murder and adultery, but what I love about him is that he keeps short accounts with God. He is quick to repent and, apart from a couple of times when he dragged his heels, he sees the need to get back into relationship with God.

There are two little phrases that we could skim over and miss, but I feel are worthy of mention. They are in verses 2 and 3: *"I will walk with integrity of heart in my house"* and *"I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless"*. If we could adapt to these two procedures, I believe the integrity of our homes would be elevated. It is usually in our homes where secret sins abide and where we watch and listen to things that we should never tolerate. May we put these practices of David into action today, and become a quick repenter. Sometimes I wonder how we can miss the really good news of the gospel transformation and become an easy target for performance-based spirituality. We can be slow to recognise corruptions of the gospel. We can see Jesus more as our perfect model than as our perfect righteousness.

Many of the psalms are categorised as prayers or praises; this one, however, is one that we can apply personally. The writer is providing insight into the specific actions he desires to undertake that prove his commitment both to God's Word and to his personal relationship with God. He applies God's Word to the point that it affects and changes behaviour. What begins changing the invisible realm of the heart becomes visible in establishing a witness of faithfulness. What people, places, or things have we allowed to have sway over us that are working against the kingdom?

Pray

Father, with the music of a coming banquet already emanating from heaven, my prayer is simply this: more and more, through and through, make me more like Jesus. You are faithful and You will do it. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The title says it all here, *“A prayer of one afflicted when they are faint and pour out their complaint before the Lord.”* It is commonly thought that this psalm was written by a young man who was sick. We know that he was young because he refers to his ‘shortened days’ and pleads to not be taken away *“in the midst of my days”*. This is not just something written for someone who is terminally ill, but *by* someone who is terminally ill. The writer is so overwhelmed by his affliction that he is going through a mental, physical, social, and spiritual crisis; he uses vivid imagery to describe how certain problems seriously affected all these areas of his existence. Grief is an experience of deep sorrow over a significant loss. Whether the loss we have suffered is that of a loved one, a job, our health or our home, the physical, emotional and spiritual suffering is intense. Grief feels like fear, like suspense, like hanging around waiting for something to happen. It gives life a permanently provisional feeling.

Up to verse 12, the language is graphic and disturbing, pouring out the agony of soul this writer finds himself in – the pain, loneliness, weakness through inability to eat, and rejection due to the stigma of his condition. Then the psalm takes a sudden shift at verse 12 and turns quite prophetic. The basis for the psalmist’s hope is that he recognises the character and nature of God. God is faithful to His promises. He will accomplish His divine plans, and faithful men will praise Him in spite of earthly trials.

This psalm is clearly divided into three. Firstly, a description of the writer’s sorrows. Secondly, the grounds for hope and glimmers of deliverance. Thirdly, the confidence he has in God. This confidence is grounded in the fact that God never changes. His promises are sure and His purposes will be accomplished. All that He has spoken must be true; all that He has promised must come to pass. Like then, the same now!

Pray

Nothing can separate me from Your love, Abba Father, nothing. That is so very true to me, and it’s my anchor of hope when I have little or any energy left to row my little boat. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

In the first line, David tells himself to praise the Lord, using the little phrase, *“O my soul”*, meaning with everything that is in him. Why? Because God has forgiven all our iniquities and healed all our diseases. Verse 4 says He *“redeems you from the pit”*, and that in itself sounds pretty cool to me. Some think this psalm was written after a fit of illness and recovery; David speaks of his diseases being healed and his youth renewed, for which reason some suggest it was written in his old age. The psalmist sets himself to count up the benefits he has received from God. He has not proceeded very far when he finds himself engaged in an impossible task. He finds he cannot count the blessings he has received in a single day; how then can he number the blessings in a week, a month, a year, or the years of his life? He may as well try to count the number of stars or grains of sand on the seashore. It cannot be done.

David talks about the covenant people who have agreed to love and obey God because He has agreed to be theirs. He is a righteous God Who took His oppressed people from Egypt into the land of Israel. God made us and He knows that He made us from dust. To God, our lives are very short, just as the life of a flower seems short to us. Maybe this psalm was composed after some life-threatening danger and God’s merciful intervention. David’s heart is filled with emotions of gratitude and praise, leading him to call on his own soul, all the angels, the hosts of heaven, and the works of God everywhere to unite in celebrating His praise. The psalm is beautiful language and can be adapted to all times and ages. It is suited to express feelings of gratitude to God for deliverance from trouble and for the kindness of His mercy. All of this have made it a favourite psalm throughout the ages as a vehicle of praise.

Pray

Father, only You are powerful enough to re-salt the de-salted; to bring me back to sanity; to restore in me the joy of my salvation; to reengage the disengaged with Your plan for our communities, cities, and the nations. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

I love this psalm. I love how it stirs the might and dominion of God in our hearts. The psalmist says some powerful things about God. He is One with honour because He always says what is true and is always fair to His people. He is full of majesty because of His power and greatness. He shines brighter than the sun, which He also created. While the first part of the psalm tells us that God created the earth and the sky, the writer goes on to remind us that God makes sure that everything still happens as He wants it to. In other words, He takes care of everything. Springs come out of the ground and flow into streams and rivers, which give water to wild animals and birds, while God pours water onto the mountains from above in the form of rain.

This psalm was probably founded on the record of Genesis 1, the creation story that is detailed there. I love how Spurgeon describes this piece of writing ... *“The Psalm gives an interpretation to the many voices of nature and sings sweetly both of creation and providence. The poem contains a complete cosmos: sea and land, cloud and sunlight, plant and animal, light and darkness, life and death, are all proved to be expressive of the presence of the Lord.”*

As the psalmist considered the power and wisdom of God in all creation, it made him long for the glory of the God behind it all to endure forever. Some of God’s works may pass away, but not His glory. The psalmist also wanted God to find pleasure in what He had created. This is perhaps the highest and most daring note in all this wonderful song of praise. So impressed with the glory and wonder and beauty of creation was the singer, that he positively called upon God to rejoice in what He had wrought. The last little section sums up how all glory must go to our incredible Creator and Sustainer of life.

Pray

Father, in every season and storm ahead, I don’t have to be afraid. You are with me and You are for me. May Your steadfast love and daily mercies flow through me today to others. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Here, yet again, the psalmist calls us to praise God. We are told to seek the Lord's presence continually. God is a covenant God. He is a God of promise and we are the recipients of promises which He says He will keep to a thousand generations. Theologians tell us that there are over 33,000 promises in the Bible, none of which will ever be broken.

This psalm tells bits of the story of Israel from Abraham to Moses. Abraham had a huge promise to father a nation so great it would be innumerable. Pass on a couple of generations, and a few of Abraham's descendants, nomads in Canaan, went to Egypt to look for food. God had prearranged for Joseph to already be there. He gave him prophetic insight in a prison cell, enabling him to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Pharaoh then took Joseph out of prison and made him a very important man, actually, second only to Pharaoh himself. After Joseph became a leader, he brought all his family there. God made them fruitful to the point of becoming stronger than the Egyptians. With Joseph and the original Pharaoh gone, the Israelites were forced into slavery.

Hundreds of years later, the Lord sent Moses and his brother Aaron to Pharaoh. God would do wonders before Pharaoh that would terrorise Egypt and free His people. There were ten plagues, the last being the worst when the Lord killed all the eldest male children in Egypt. This was the event that eventually convinced Pharaoh to release these people. The Egyptian people were actually relieved when the Israelites left and they gave gifts of silver and gold to them. They were obviously afraid of the Israelites because of what the Lord had done. When God led them out, He led them through Sinai, keeping them safe with a cloud by day and fire by night.

What a psalm, what a God!

Pray

Father, this psalm today reminds me that You are the God of everything. There is nothing that has ever caught You out. You've never had to scratch Your head and wonder what to do next. You are the Creator, Planner, and Perfecter of all things. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This concludes book four of the Psalms. Most people link this psalm to the same writer as the previous one as it continues the same story. It's quite sad for nearly everything in Psalm 106 tells us that God's people did not obey Him. But He loved them anyway! Even at the end, when they went to Babylon, He still loved them and after seventy years, He brought them home again. In verses 4 and 5, the psalmist prays that he will be among those who go home. There is a firm confession of sin both personally and generationally. It seems to be more sins of omission, although I'm sure both omission and commission are implied as the writer talks about how the people forgot God's abundance and steadfast love.

The psalmist gives examples of Israel's discontentment while they travelled from Egypt to Canaan. They murmured and were jealous of Moses. God had to judge them by giving them what they were asking for, but it brought disease on them. The sons of Korah complained against Moses and were swallowed up by the ground. (Leaders do not have license to be abusive, God will judge them for that, but there are serious consequences for speaking against them loosely.) They made a golden calf and worshipped it. They refused to go into the Promised Land after a bad report. They made Moses so angry that his act in anger prevented him from ever going into the Promised Land. They did not destroy the Canaanites as God had commanded, but intermarried and worshipped their false gods, bringing them into a trap like an animal or bird, a trap they could not get out of. But there was something worse: to worship these false gods, they had to sacrifice their children. This made the land dirty and desecrated. Then God was angry and He gave His people into the hand of foreign governments. Yet, again and again, God would receive them back. Oh, the unlimited mercy and grace of God.

Pray

Father, renew, refresh, and restore me today. Where there is floundering, bring flourishing; where there is despair, bring delight; where there is hopelessness, bring encouragement. I abandon myself to Your promises and Your faithfulness. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

