



Trusting God
For A
Better Tomorrow

Psalm 42-52 Journal

Wendy Pope

Psalm 42

Author: Sons of Korah

Psalm 42 is credited to the sons of Korah, men that David put in charge of music when the Ark of the Covenant was returned to the tabernacle. As I read the words, my mind began to sing one of my all-time favorite worship songs, *As the Deer*, by Martin Nystrom. He writes “*As the deer panteth for the water so my soul longeth after Thee. You, oh Lord, are my one desire and long to worship thee.*” Nystrom gave the words *pant* and *long* a formal flare by adding *th*. I think there is something powerful, yet beautifully poetic, to words ending in *th*. Singing the lyrics or even speaking these words stirs my spirit, and, might I say, ignites a longing in my soul.

The composer of this Psalm is thirsty. He is thirsty for fellowship with the living God—once a regular experience, but now a distant memory. We are not told what induced his thirst or caused the broken fellowship, but it’s easy to sense the dryness of his throat in our own.

After reading verse one, my mind was plagued with a disturbing question. Perhaps it is one we all should address.

Has my longing for God ever been this intense? If so, how was my longing satisfied?

The Wrong Watering Holes

Our world offers many “thirst-quenching” alternatives, making it easy for us to slip into the wrong watering holes. Turn on the television, browse the internet, or flip through a magazine to see the world’s “watering holes”. They suggest to us that fame, financial security, a new figure, or a fabulous makeover will satisfy our longings. But there is only one source that offers complete satisfaction.

Read Jeremiah 2:12-14

How does God refer to Himself? _____

How does He respond when we go to the wrong watering hole?

The living God of the Old Testament and all who are in heaven are appalled when we neglect and reject our God, the satisfying source of refreshment and life. Jeremiah calls our wrong watering holes broken cisterns. In those days, a cistern was used to hold long-lasting supplies of water. Like these cisterns, the world’s watering holes are broken, full of cracks, and not able to satisfy. In fact, they leave us dehydrated and dying, yet longing for even more of the wrong things.

Read John 4:13

Jesus offers water to a woman who is spiritually thirsty. The water He offers is from the same source we read about in Jeremiah.

What is the result of drinking the water that Jesus offers?

Seasons of Spiritual Dryness

Sometimes, the ebb and flow of life may lead us into a season of spiritual dryness. We suddenly discover, without warning, that our relationship with the Lord is not as it was before. Unless we are careful, dryness can lead to drought. That dryness is a warning for us to wake up and shake up our “normal” with the Lord.

Spiritual drought has threatened my life before. Recently, my teaching prep time was rich, but my personal morning time with the Lord was starting to shrivel. In an effort to shake up my normal, I loaded my favorite worship songs onto an mp3 player and added music to my quiet-time moments with God. This simple act profoundly changed my relationship with the Lord. My spiritual well deepened, and the living water flowed stronger than ever before. My spiritual cup was filled before my day began. I no longer needed—or wanted—to take my cup to the wrong watering holes to be filled.

Read John 7:38.

What does Jesus promise and to whom does He make the promise?

Unstopping the Dam, Resuming the Flow

Our river can get contaminated with sin and/or dammed up by personal indulgence. But the flow of water (joy, contentment, and other blessings of Christ) is not immediately cut off. Little by little, our fountain clogs up until there is barely a drip. Resuming the flow maybe as simple as doing what I did—change the normal way of connecting with Christ. Or perhaps it may require some deeper personal examination. A personal examination might start with questions like:

- Am I experiencing spiritual dryness and headed for drought?
- Do I regularly stop by the wrong watering holes?
- Is there something in my life that I long for more than Christ?
- Do I have any unconfessed sin in my life?

The world’s water is tainted with pleasure, possessions, and power. Drinking it will only increase and intensify our thirst for more worldly water. Yet our spiritual thirst is only meant to be quenched with the life-giving water of the Lord.

Read Matthew 5:6.

What happens when we hunger and thirst—or “panteth”—for the right things?

Those who *panteth* and *longeth* for righteousness will be satisfied. We will be filled with the life-giving things of Christ, and they will then overflow, spilling into a lost and dying world. And the best part? We will never be thirsty again!

Psalm 42



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

Psalm 43

Author: Sons of Korah

In reading Psalm 43 and reflecting back on Psalm 42, we see that the psalmist's predicament did not change. However, through his sorrow, the psalmist concludes both psalms with an upbeat tone, choosing to put his hope in God and praise Him regardless. This begs a question that longs to be answered: If his predicament has not changed, how can praise be on his tongue?

What has changed? What could have happened within these few lamenting words? Might I suggest that the psalmist changed His mind? He made a choice. His moments of lamenting led the psalmist to redirect and realign his thinking to what he knew to be true of God. In a short time, he was able to subdue his pain with a choice to praise. This teaches us a valuable lesson: hope is not deferred, it's seized. We do not have to wander aimlessly through trials waiting for hope. We can seize it the very moment that we catch a glimpse of its light!

Read Proverbs 13:12.

What is the result of hope deferred?

Read Isaiah 40:31.

How is an ailing heart strengthened?

Renaming and reclaiming His promises will renew our hope and give us the strength and energy to push through our pain. We become empowered to seize the hope necessary to defeat the unknowns and the uncertainties of our circumstances.

In Seizing Hope: We Offer What We Have

After tasting the freedom that just a glimpse of hope offers, we can't help but desire more. Fortunately, God's river of hope never runs dry. But to seize more of His hope, we must surrender all those things in which we place our hope and trust Him with it all. You may be thinking, "I knew there was a catch." The good news is that God never asks us to give up something without replacing it with something even greater.

In the following Scripture, God asks a woman to surrender what she had, trusting that her son would be saved.

Read 2 Kings 4:2.

What did the woman tell Elisha?

Read 2 Kings 4:5-7.

What did God do with her little?

Have you experienced a season of hardship and felt you had nothing, except a little hope? Seize hope. Then seize more hope. And watch Him make *much* of your *little*.

Read Deuteronomy 32:4.

What is true about our God? Let this truth redirect our thinking.

In Seizing Hope: We Expose the Dark to the Light

Read I John 1:5

Who is light?

Like the psalmist, there are times when we are not as close to the Lord as we once were. A distance forms and is often undetected—until a crisis arises or when wisdom is needed to make a life-changing decision. We then become aware of our need and are filled with a sense of urgency. But often we are uncertain of our next step. In these moments, it is easy to follow the glow of the world’s artificial light go to the wrong source of light and truth.

This kind of synthetic light may lead us to the bottom of a bottle, to holding a handful of pills, to standing in a hotel room with someone who “really” understands, or to keeping late nights in a high rise trying to seal a big deal. Many times we are not even aware of its deception until the light burns out, leaving us in an even darker place than the one before.

The real, authentic light that comes from God never burns out. It exposes the dark places of the unknown and uncertainty in our lives. His light and truth will replace our sense of urgency with patience, our fear with peace, our despair with hope, and our guilt with freedom.

Reread I John 1:5

What is not found in God?

Read John 8:12.

How can we avoid the darkness?

God is light, and in Him there is no darkness. In Him we can completely avoid the allure that the false, artificial light of this world sends out. This is news worthy of celebrating!

In Seizing Hope: We Take Up Residence in the Holy Place

The psalmist wanted the light and truth of God to guide him and bring him to the holy mountain, the place where the Israelites could be in the presence of God. He knew that, if he could get to the holy place, and get in the presence of God, everything would be all right. I felt the same way during a season of my own season of hopelessness when we lived through 18 months of undiagnosed health issues with my husband.

Although we can often feel His presence everywhere, there is just something special and powerful about being in God’s house. We can feel Him there more powerfully, and we can receive comfort from His people. If circumstances prohibit you from physically getting to church, make your bedside or a kitchen table a beautiful altar. Meet Him wherever you are able, and humbly seize the hope He offers.

Psalm 43



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

Psalm 44

Author: Sons of Korah

Our battle-weary psalmist has now tasted the sweetness of victory. He lifts his banner high and experiences the thrill of defeating his foe. Yet the pomp and circumstance of victory has already faded as he faces another battle. Feeling let down, he humbly approaches God and begs Him for yet another victory.

I have found myself in this battle-wearied position once or twice in my life when intense circumstances cause my once clear vision of my Commander to become blurred. My post-victory strength and my increased faith suddenly seem weak and faltering, and the only words I can mutter are “please help me.” Let’s explore ways to remain battle strong and faith filled.

Remembering

There is much power in remembering. Memories generate laughter. Memories produce tears. They provide comfort to a restless heart and bring peace to an anxious mind.

During these battle-weary days, taking the time to walk down memory lane may not *seem* like the best use of time and energy. We are action driven, act-now creatures. It might seem like, in the midst of our struggles, we should be planning and strategizing and *doing*. However, remembering not only builds God-confidence, remembering also increases our faith. Remembering *is* our battle strategy to make us battle-strong.

Read Hebrews 11:3-11, 17-31.

How does remembering God’s faithfulness to others encourage you?

What does remembering God’s faithfulness to others teach you about God?

Now it’s your turn. Take a moment to walk down memory lane, and thank God for all the times He brought you victory. Use the back of the paper if you need more space.

Read Deuteronomy 20:4.

What does this verse tell you about God? What does it tell you about your battle?

Read Psalm 143:5

In our time of remembering, what else should we remember?

We have to remember that holiness is more about the devotion *of* my life than perfection *in* my life. Scripture tells us we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Falling short of the glory of God however, does not disqualify us from holiness. We were created to be holy.

Remembering is our battle strategy. It makes us strong and keeps us going until victory is ours. But what if God's plan is defeat?

When Victory is Not Permitted

Read Judges 2:15.

What happened when Israel went out to fight?

“The Lord’s hand was against them.” This is one of those passages I find difficult to understand. Am I alone? God is loving and faithful. He is our Defender who fights for us. With these being true, what reason could God have for allowing His children to experience defeat?

Read Judges 2:6-15. List some of the reasons defeat is permitted.

Read Romans 8:31.

Who is for us?

God is for us. Then who is against us? Might I suggest that we are against us? Yes, we can be our worst enemy. We stand against ourselves when we forsake God rather than remaining faithful to Him. We invite God’s anger each time we choose to submit to our stubborn ways and disobey what He has instructed. Such behavior not only provokes His anger but evokes His discipline.

There are times when God backs off allowing us to walk away from His plan to do things our way and fall subject to the consequences of the fall. He may choose to deliver discipline right at the moment of disobedience. His purpose in either case is not to bring us harm but to bring us home, home to Him and His loving care.

Read the following and fill in the blank:

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are faithless, He _____

Nahum 1:3a

God is _____

Dear Lord, We remember your faithfulness and ask you to forgive us for when we forsake you. Rise up and help us; redeem us because of your unfailing love.

Psalm 44



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

Psalm 45

Author: Sons of Korah

This is a wedding song that was played at the marriage ceremony of an Israeli king and his foreign bride, most likely King Solomon's wedding to an Egyptian Princess (1 Kings 3:1). In addition, this wedding song is also Messianic in nature, depicting the royal wedding between our Messiah-Groom King Jesus, and His bride, the church.

The Bridegroom, Jesus, is clothed in all His majesty and splendor, wearing regal robes and standing ready for the big day. His bride is dressed in a gown of fine linen, bright and clean, and she waits in her chambers for the processional to begin. Can you hear the Bridal march?

Details, Details, Details

Planning a wedding is quite an undertaking. Traditionally, the wedding details are the responsibility of the bride, and she is eager to get busy. She may call a wedding planner to help with all the decisions she has to make. She scurries from here to there choosing the caterer, venue, date, and dress. Such details can tire a bride out, leaving her with little time, energy, or emotion to enjoy preparing herself for the wedding. How wonderfully relaxing would it be if a bride's only responsibility would be to prepare *herself* to walk down the aisle and to her eagerly await her groom?

Fellow brides in Christ, we can relax! Everything has been taken care of. A gown has been uniquely designed for you, perfectly fit for your style and body type. And there is no need to be concerned about the reception. Our Groom has culinary delights planned for that day, and it includes all our favorites. Yes, our Groom has covered every detail, every detail except one.

Read Mark 13:32.

What detail is unknown to our Groom? Who knows this information?

Read Revelation 19:6.

How does the bride come to the ceremony?

Getting Ready

Since the wedding date is known only to our Groom's Father, the bride must be ready at all times. Indeed, our only responsibility as Jesus' bride is to make ourselves ready for the big day.

It is essential to get to know our Groom by spending time with Him, making every effort to know what pleases Him, and discovering His likes and dislikes. He loves good conversation and fellowship.

Another way for the bride to get to know her Groom is to read His book. He is the author of the number one best-selling book of all times. This book gives real insight to His character, His likes and dislikes, even what He is looking for in His bride.

Read 1 Peter 1:16-17.

What has our Groom called His bride, each of us, to be?

Yes, our Groom has called His bride to be holy. I am not sure how you feel when you hear the word *holy*, but for me, the word *unworthy* comes to my mind. Suddenly I see my sins begin to walk across the stage of my mind like a silent black-and-white feature film, reminding me of all the reasons I cannot be holy.

But we have to remember that holiness is more about the devotion *of* my life than the perfection—or lack thereof—*in* my life. Scripture tells us we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Falling short of the glory of God, however, still does not disqualify us from holiness. We are created to be holy.

Read Genesis 1:27.

Who are we created to be like?

Holiness is our family-of-God heritage. Since we are created to be holy, then how do we get over the feeling of being disqualified, and get on with being holy? The first step is to remember that we are qualified by our family-of-God heritage. It's in our DNA, so to speak. Our next step is found in the Old Testament.

Read Leviticus 20:7-8.

What does God ask His children to do?

When we obey, what does God do?

Holiness begins with obedience. When we obey, He makes us holy. Transformation begins to happen when obedience becomes our natural response to God. But it takes time for obedience to take root in our heart. We mustn't get discouraged with our progress, but instead, we should remember that holiness is more about the devotion *of* my life than the perfection *in* my life.

Read Philippians 1:6.

How can we remain confident in our walk with God as we pursue holiness?

As we become holy, we will be able to stand worthy to receive our reward for our obedience and faithfulness, reflecting our Father's flawless image and dressed in our fine, linen wedding gown on our "wedding day with Christ. I wonder if Heaven's angels will be singing Psalm 45 then, and if we will hear them enunciate, "the king is enthralled by your beauty." If so, every act of obedience is worth hearing those words!

Psalm 45



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

Psalm 46

Author: Sons of Korah

Our family loves a great movie. After watching the first movie, we hope there will be a part two and eventually a part three. The next few psalms are written to celebrate God's deliverance, His defense of His people, and His presence among them. Though we are uncertain of the exact occasion, we know that God's people had more than once received His deliverance, experienced His defense, and sensed His ever-present presence. The psalmist celebrates who God is: He is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble, the Most High, and always with us as our Fortress.

Celebrate Who God Is

Fill in the blank. God is...

God is Sovereign, and He is the strongest of the strong, in charge of all things at all times. With idolatry running rampant and times for war and invasion always possible, God's people needed to be reminded of who He is.

This reminder is good for all of God's people, for all times, including us in the 21st century. Our national as well as personal security could be under attack at any moment. We live in times of war and rumors of war. National and personal disasters can cause our spirits to fear, but this we can know: God *is* everything we need for a secure and certain future.

We can know the attributes of God in our head, but it isn't until we personally experience them that we can truly celebrate them. In order to gain insight into learning how to be certain that what is in our head goes to our heart, we will study this Psalm in reverse.

Be Still and Know

The words "*be still and know*" are difficult words to heed as we journey through our act-now-and-think-later, it's-easier-to-say-I-am-sorry-than-to-ask-for-permission world. We are people of action. We rush and fix. We plan. We strategize. We execute. We defend. "Be still and do nothing" is a foreign concept to most of us, and it may seem like a total waste of time.

Be Still

The Hebrew definition of "be still" paints a picture of a completely helpless person who is at the end of her rope. To really be still, we should relax rather than rush, and refrain instead of execute. Learning to relax and refrain actually positions us to experience God's work in our lives. God's call to action is two-fold, direct, and without confusion.

Read Psalm 46:10

What is the first part of God's call to action for His children?

Read Mark 4:39.

What words did Jesus speak? Who or what was He speaking to? What was the response?

Even the winds recognized the powerful directive of God and obeyed Him! Our response should be nothing less.

To know

I have learned many things about many things in my lifetime. I have also forgotten many things about many things. What I remember, however, are the times I have experienced something with my mind, body, soul, and spirit. Whether the experience was painful or brought pleasure because I felt it, experienced it, I remembered it.

The word, *know*, or *ya'da* (ya-dah) in the original Hebrew, implies having knowledge of God through experience. We can *know* who God is by being still; by allowing ourselves to experience [know] who He is. Stillness is more about submission of the heart than position of the body. And our knowledge of God grows through the experience of submission. The more we recognize and participate in His work, the greater we will *know* Him.

Read Deuteronomy 7:9

What can we know, or experience, about God?

God Is

The word, know, in Deuteronomy 7:9, is represented by the same Hebrew word as *know* in verse eleven of our psalm. The psalmist celebrated who God is through his experiences. Now we hear Moses proclaim who he *knows* God is. He is God, the faithful God.

In Deuteronomy 7:9, what does God do and for whom?

My girlfriends, we are part of that “thousands of generations”. This makes the hair on my neck stand up when I think of it. Way back, when God thought of us—you and me—He made a way for us to *know* Him.

What is our part in knowing God is God, He is faithful, and He is covenant keeping?

Have you ever asked, “How do know I God?” I sure have, too many times to count. But we can all rejoice, because today we know how we can *know* who God is!

When we are *still*, we can *know* who God is: He is our Refuge and Strength, our Fortress, and an ever-present God who is a faithful, covenant-keeping God to those who love and obey Him. Wow and Amen!

Psalm 46



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

Psalm 47

Author: Sons of Korah

♪ Sing praises to our God!

♪ Sing praises!

♪ Sing praises to our King!

♪ Sing praises!

I hear the melodies of many praise songs such as, *Sing, Sing, Sing* by Chris Tomlin, *He is Exalted* by Twila Paris, and *10,000 Reasons* by Matt Redman. If these worship songs happen to be unfamiliar to you, type the title into your preferred search engine, and let the praise begin!

What is your favorite worship song right now? What is your favorite of all time?

There is nothing like praising the Lord! Sometimes praising the Lord is easy—He is so good that we can't hold back the praise! Other times, praising the Lord is hard—He is still good, but our not-so-good circumstances can tempt us to hold back our praise.

Sacrificial Praise

There are times when we unintentionally let our circumstances restrain our praise. Our pain leads us to a place where praise seems impossible. It isn't that we doubt that God is praise worthy. We are simply too weak from the battles in this life to utter a word.

I felt like this when my husband's health was failing and our future was so uncertain. Something had to give. I was so weary. Perhaps you have been there. One Sunday, I brought my little bit of faith to the altar at my church. I just *had* to offer Him praise or I couldn't go on. As praise poured through my pain, I was consumed with praising God and not with the uncertainty of our future. All I could say was, "better is one day in your house than a thousand elsewhere" (Ps.84:10). Though it was difficult, the praise brought the release, relief, and refreshment my mind, body, and soul that I so desperately needed.

Read Isaiah 43:21.

Why were we created?

Whether in joy or in sorrow, delight or disappointment, calm or confusion, the sacrifice of praise brings a presence of God to our mind, body, and soul like nothing else can. We are created to praise God in all things. However, there is a price for such a sacrifice, and it's worth the cost. As we sacrifice our sorrow, disappointments, and confusion through praise, we experience Him in a way few ever do.

Read Hebrews 13:15.

How often should we offer sacrificial praise?

Compulsory Praise

God's goodness, mercy, and grace, and the thoughts He has toward His children, are simply too great to comprehend. There are days when witnessing His blessing and His greatness are overwhelming, and we are compelled to worship Him. Dictionary.com defines "compel" as having a powerful and irresistible effect, requiring acute attention, admiration, and respect. In other words, what we witness is so marvelous we just *have to* praise Him.

While God is always at work (John 5:17) and is always worthy of our praise, sometimes we don't see His handiwork. We are blind to His workings. Like those whose physical sight was healed by Jesus, our spiritual sight can be healed.

Read Mark 10:50-52

What did Bartimaeus ask God?

The more we see of God, the less constrained our praises will be. Rain following weeks of dry conditions can ignite praise. Discovering our favorite items are on sale or sharing breakfast with a special friend can cause our lips to sing His praise. We just need to have our sight restored to His wonder, and the praise will not cease.

Pause and ask God to help you see, then spend a few minutes praising Him. List some praiseworthy thoughts in the space below.

Read 1 Peter 1:3-5.

If it is hard to find something to praise God about, what does Peter suggest? List his suggestions in the space below.

El Elyon, our Lord Most High, is most worthy of our praise. He redeemed our past and secured our future. His divine guardianship shields us from all threats of danger until He returns for us. Are you breaking out in compulsory praise yet? Sing, sing, sing His praises. Sing them loud so He can hear, and delight in His praise.

Spend the remainder of your time with the Lord today offering either celebratory or sacrificial praise. He *is* worthy. Rather than remembering past praise, praise Him for today. Today is the day to praise the Lord.

Psalm 47



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

Jerusalem's history is full of victories. This song celebrates Jerusalem and the trembling power it had. The Leader of Heaven's Armies, El Elyon, God Most High, has chosen to take up residence in the city on the hill. His presence in this holy place makes it strong and invincible. The LORD is great, He is worthy of praise, and He calls Jerusalem home.

The Residency of God

Jerusalem was strong. The enemies trembled at its leadership and its location. Positioned on top of a hill with valleys on the south, east, and west, it made the enemies' advance from the north, and it was difficult to hide. The city was hemmed in by four towers and ten gates. Who would dare attack such an intimidating, fortified city? Those inside the walls could be confident, safe, and live securely.

Today, God takes up residency in the hearts of every man or woman, boy or girl who invites Him in. His Word guards our mind. His presence provides physical protection by going before and coming after us (Ps.139:5). His Holy Spirit guides our soul with wise instruction. So we can live in confidence, safety, and security. The enemy should take note and beware, and he should approach a fortified life with caution.

Read James 4:7

What does our enemy do as a result of God's authority in our life?

Submission is the key to security in Christ. He resides in the life of every believer, but unless we submit to His leadership, we will live in fear, just like a city with no towers, gates, or valleys. And like an army, following His leadership will make us strong and invincible. Our adversary will tremble as He approaches, knowing we are hemmed in and fortified by the Leader of Heaven's Armies, El Elyon, our God Most High.

The Right Hand of God

The phrase *right hand of God* (v10) is referenced in both the Old and New Testament. God's right hand metaphorically represents His justice, His rightness, His infinite power and authority. As I visualize my Savior sitting at the right hand of God (Heb.12:2) watching over me, ready to act on my behalf, I am overwhelmed by His comfort and security.

I also love the prophet Isaiah's picture of God's mighty yet gentle right hand. This is a portrait of someone who is fearful of what lies ahead and needs to be lifted out of fear and into a place of faith. This person's courage is gone, and he is desperate for support. Have you been there? Perhaps the person in the portrait is you!

Read Isaiah 41:10.

Write the verse in the space below. Then circle all the things God will do.

Read Isaiah 41:13.

Which hand does God hold as He gives us help and support?

Can you picture it? God using His right hand (Isaiah 41:10) to hold our right hand (Isaiah 41:13). In order to hold a person's right hand, one must be facing the other person. In our time of need, we can look up and see our powerful, loving, and gentle Father's face as He takes our right hand and assures us of His help.

The Ramparts, Towers, and Citadels

Read this aloud: "Walk about (fill in your name), go around her, count her towers, consider well her ramparts, and view her citadels." (48:12)

This victory chant teases and taunts the enemy. It's somewhat of a dare to our enemy. In essence, it says, "You think you are strong? You think you can take me? Walk around me; look at my strongholds, defense, and center of command. You think you can take me, *I don't think so!*"

In recent days, I have found myself under enemy attack. The residency of Christ in me has always been secure, because He never leaves or forsakes His children. But my "citadel", my fortress was under attack. But through my daily Bible reading, I found an amazingly powerful word for my enemy in the book of Ezra.

Ezra has returned to Jerusalem, from Babylon, to begin construction on the Temple. As the construction began, enemies came to the construction site, taunting him and asking if they could "help." Ezra shot them a one-liner I won't soon forget.

Read Ezra 4:3a.

What does Ezra tell the enemy?

From the command post of our fortress, we can inform our enemy, "You will have not part of this work!" Girls, we have the power to command our enemy to flee (James 4:7). Let's repeat Ezra's fight chant and celebrate our strong, invincible God, His power, and His residency in our lives. The victory is ours!

Psalm 48



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

Psalm 49

Author: Sons of Korah/Anonymous

No one can exclude themselves from this message. Whether high or low, rich or poor, pull up a chair and have a seat. There is something important to learn.

Prosperity 101

The root of the psalmist's lesson is the futility of worldliness. The poor and the rich alike will leave this life the same way they entered it, empty-handed. He advises not to become over-awed or captivated by the temporal success of the wealthy.

Read Ecclesiastes 5:10.

What happens to those who love money?

Our world is full of those who *have* as well as those who *have-not*. Some of the *haves* have so much that it is easy for the *have-nots* to become *want-mores*. The psalmist warns us to guard our hearts and minds against the temptation that wanting more can have on our life.

Read Ecclesiastes 5:10.

What does Solomon call the love wealth?

Prosperity is a successful, flourishing, or thriving condition, especially in financial respects. It is important to note that prosperity relates to *any* condition, not just financial. The Bible has a lot to say about prosperity, but not all the references have to do with wealth. For our study, we want to learn to be successful, flourishing, and thriving in all areas of life, and we must learn to avoid becoming a *want-more*.

Make the Right Investment

Want-mores invest in the wrong thing—themselves. Is it wrong to want a better life? Absolutely not. My mother-in-law grew up dirt poor. She literally could see the stars through her roof and the dirt through her floor. When she married my father-in-law, they only had two pots—without lids. Even as they pinched pennies and then finally purchased a home without holes in the roof and floor, they shared their prosperity with others. My mother-in-law often baked cakes to give people for their birthday. She took meals to and cared for the sick. My father-in-law, a jack-of-all-trades, lent his talent and expertise to those in need. They invested in the right thing—others.

Proverbs 11:25.

What does generosity generate?

When we generously invest in others, God generously invests in us. Since my father-in-law passed away, my mother-in-law has lived quite comfortably. Is she comfortable only because she and my father-in-law provided for her later years? I would argue not. They recognized the source of true prosperity—God—and they chose to make the right investments in what mattered most—others.

Read Matthew 25:44-45.

Who does Jesus define as “the least of these?”

When we invest in others, we invest in Jesus. Investing can’t get any better than that!

ROI—Return On Investment

Read Galatians 6:7-10.

Summarize Paul’s message.

When we invest—or sow—we reap God’s blessings. And though sowing can be exhausting, we can’t forget that it has eternal value. Our reaping is an eternal investment as well. In God’s Kingdom, our Return On Investment is huge. Our reward for investing in eternal things will be super-sized when the Kingdom of God comes to earth for all eternity.

Read 1 Timothy 6:18-19

What command are we to obey?

What is the heavenly result of our obedience?

It’s easy to say, “I don’t have anything to give.” Yet investing in others is not all about money. My in-laws raised four children on a single income, but each of them found ways to invest in God’s Kingdom by using their time, talents, and tithe to help others. We’ve learned that using our time, talents, and tithe for the good of others not only advances the Kingdom of God but also helps us avoid becoming a *want-more*. But Joshua, Israel’s leader, learned a little something more about prosperity. He will teach the final Prosperity 101 lesson.

Read Joshua 1:8.

What did Joshua do that led to his prosperity?

Here he teaches us that filling our lives with God’s word leads to eternal prosperity and success. What more could we want?

Psalm 49



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

Psalm 50

Author: Asaph, David's Chief Musician

Asaph, David's music director, has been credited with penning twelve psalms, or songs. He was appointed by David and served through the rise and fall of the wisest man who ever lived, Solomon. Asaph invites us into the God's courtroom to hear the case God vs. The Faith of God's People.

The Scene

Do you love a drama with a good court scene? I have to admit, I do. Personally, I have only been in a courtroom a couple of times. One time, upon entering the room, I became panic-stricken, my pulse raced, and mind flashed back to reruns of *LA Law*, the court TV drama from the 80's. There I stood, anxious over a minor traffic infraction.

In our psalm, the Judges, the Mighty One (El) God, and the LORD (Yahweh), are in the courtroom. They are at the bench, gavels in hand. Heaven and Earth have been summoned as excellent witnesses, for they have watched God's People—for many generations—and are called to give eyewitness' testimony of their depravity.

Can you image how the defendants felt at facing the heavy charge of falsifying faith? Standing before the Plaintiffs, the defendants must determine if their faith is real, or if their faith is fake.

Jot down a few emotions you might experience if you were accused of having a fake faith that once was real.

Real Faith

God accuses the defendants of observing the rhetoric of rituals, but losing the real faith they once enjoyed. They were following the Law given to Moses about sacrifices, but they had become more devoted to their acts rather than their purpose.

The rhetoric of rituals captures the heart of God's people today as well. Church, and church's traditions, can easily become ritualistic—and a poor substitute for real faith. God wants real. God deserves real: real worship, real sacrifice, and a real relationship. And while real comes at a cost, the price you pay is worth it.

Read 2 Samuel 24:19-24.

Write David's response to Araunah in verse 24.

Real faith has a cost. Perhaps the price necessary for real faith is giving up bitterness, surrendering pride, or offering forgiveness. Maybe it's sacrificing the uncertainty of the future or the disappointment of unfulfilled dreams.

What price has God asked you to pay for real faith? Think about it, and write it down.

Fake Faith

A counterfeit faith must sicken our Lord. The accused are charged with associating with bad company and rejecting God's discipline and instruction. God charges them with speaking out of both sides of their mouths, of reciting His law and taking His covenant, and then speaking with evil and deceit on their tongues. It is one thing to go through the motions of faith, but it's another to completely reject the Lord's ways while giving the appearance of worshiping Him.

Read Romans 2:8-9.

What does Paul call those who reject the truth?

What awaits those who reject the truth?

Self-seeking is the exact opposite of what God's expects from those who call Him Lord. The result of self-seeking and self-pleasing is anger and wrath. Who wants that kind of life?

Read Jeremiah 29:13-14.

How can you avoid counterfeit faith?

What will we find when you seek God?

Real faith honors the Lord. We honor the Lord and develop real faith as we seek Him. *Seek* In the Hebrew, *seek* means to ask, beg, inquire, and or make inquisition. These words require action, and the action of *seeking* is up to us. If we want different, we have to seek different.

About ten years ago, I started seeking with both an "ask and a beg": "How do I love you Lord? Help me love you." He directed me to His Word, the Psalms, in fact, to investigate His truths and to test their authenticity through obedience. My *seeking* involved rising early, reading the Bible, and praying. I don't know what your seeking looks like, but I know that seeking honors God and transforms fake faith into real faith. Do you want *that* kind of life?

Psalm 50



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

We meet King David after a “come to Jesus” talk with the prophet Nathan. David has sinned. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, and in an effort to conceal his sin, David sent Bathsheba’s husband Uriah to front line of battle to assure his death (2 Samuel 11). Bathsheba became pregnant as a result of the affair. David deceived others by marrying Bathsheba, and then he claimed a premature delivery. God then sent Nathan to set the king straight. Sounds like a soap opera, doesn’t it?

It is Good to Have a Nathan

I would hope that David would have eventually repented of his sin. Thankfully, God expedited the process by sending Nathan, and Nathan did not sugar-coat the message. David had been blinded by his sin. He had fallen so deep into the abyss of sin that he was unable to see truth. What a sobering moment this must have been for David!

Our “Nathans” boldly stand with us amidst the darkness of our sin to shine the light of God’s truth. They help us face the reality of our sin and walk with us to find a place of repentance. But it is possible that our Nathan will not be a friend or even someone we know.

Read Galatians 6:1a.

What is the role of a Nathan?

Think of time God sent a Nathan directly to you. Write the initials of this person, and then pause to pray for them.

The Reality of Our Sin

Nathan’s hard words shook David to the core. As his offenses came to light, so did the reality of the One he had offended. David had seduced Bathsheba into the sin of adultery. He had murdered Uriah. His sin *involved* two other people, but ultimately, his sin was against God.

As fallen humans, our proclivity is to not take sin seriously, especially if we don’t see direct harm or consequences of our sin. Such an approach to sin numbs us to the reality of our sin. We fail to experience the heartache or express genuine sorrow associated with repentance. David’s numbness is tangible when He says, “*Against, you, you only, have I sinned and done evil in your sight.*”

Read Proverbs 28:10.

What is the consequence of concealing sin? What is the result of confessing sin?

In Psalm 51, what verses indicate David was no longer numb to his sin?

Dare to Ask

There is such freedom in repentance. As we read David's words, we can feel refreshment arrive as remorse departs. We can experience the same renewal when we dare to ask God to specifically reveal our sin. Our heartache is healed, and our brokenness is mended as we give Him permission to search our hearts.

If you don't know where to start, here is a great Dare-to-Ask Prayer:

Search me oh Lord, and investigate my life, O God. Find out everything about me. Cross-examine and test me. Get a clear picture of what I'm about. See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong—then guide me on the road to eternal life.
(Psalm 139:22-24-The Message)

How do you feel about asking God to be specific in revealing your sin?

The Joy Robber

Let's face it. Sin is fun. If it weren't, we would not sin. There is a rush as well as a temporary joy that accompanies rebellion. The idea of throwing caution to the wind and doing what we want to do regardless of the consequences seems like a good idea in the moment. But eventually, the weight of sin subdues the momentary pleasures. Pausing under its weight, we realize that the real joy we once knew is stolen from us each time we surrender to sin. David is feeling weight!

What does David ask God to restore?

I love that we serve a God who will not only forgive our sin, but also restores the joy we are so willing to trade for the temporary pleasure of sin.

The Power of Restored Joy

Read Psalm 51:13

What does David say he will do when his joy is restored?

The beauty of a new heart, restored salvation, and willing spirit will be contagious. As we live in the fullness of Christ, we reveal His splendor (Is.60:3) and become a light to the lost world. And others will yearn for our light. Let's dare to ask God the hard questions about our sin. God will use what we hear to bring freedom to our life, and then He will use our life to bring others that same freedom.

Psalm 51



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

Psalm 52

Author: David

In this Psalm, David is running and hiding from Saul. Leaving his cave of safety, David seeks help from Ahimelech, the priest in Nob (1 Sam.21:1-9). Saul's chief herdsman, Doeg, witnesses Ahimelech giving David bread and a sword, and with this juicy piece of information hanging on his lips, Doeg runs to tell Saul. Then Saul, accompanied by his armies, goes to Nob, confronts Ahimelech, and then kills him—as well as his entire family for helping David (1 Sam 22:11-23)! Because of this, Doeg gained great favor with the king, and he did not mind others knowing it.

The Wrong View of Self

You have probably known—or know—people like Doeg. They are powerful, influential, and skilled in many areas, and they want favor with “the upper management”. Such “*Doegs*” are good at many things—just ask them. It is quite obvious that David is tired of hearing about Doeg's skills and “good works” for Doeg had a misguided view of himself. In taking credit for his skills, Doeg dishonored the One who gave him those skills.

The bottom line is: self-seeking and self-promoting is contrary to how God calls His children to live.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31.

What should our skills promote?

Read Galatians 6:14.

In whom does Paul boast?

It requires humility to deflect any glory we receive, give it to God, and boast only in Jesus. Humility is a characteristic that only can be developed through in-the-moment practice. The more we deflect our “self”, the more we reflect Him. In true God-style, He will then bless our obedience in ways greater than we could ever imagine.

Read Proverbs 22:4.

Other than a right view of self, what other blessings belong to the humble?

David is a direct recipient of these blessings and knows it. Let's investigate!

I Am an Olive Tree

David declares his correct views of God and self in verse eight with a rather odd statement, “But I am an olive tree.” An olive tree is strong and long living. When fruitful and cared for, an olive tree can live up to 1000 years! They are known as a symbol of joy, peace, and happiness. Frankly, I don't care one little bit about living 1000 years, but the symbolism of the olive tree is appealing to me.

Read Psalm 52:8

How did David flourish?

David trusted in God's unfailing love. *Unfailing love* is more closely translated as *mercy*, and it is defined as kindness, favor, pity, or reproach. Did you notice that David not only trusted in God's kindness and favor, but he also trusted (had confidence, placed his hope in) in God's pity and reproach?

In what area of God's *unfailing love* do you find it most comfortable to trust? Kindness? Favor? Pity? Reproach? Why?

An olive tree will flourish only when it is planted in the right climate, receives the right nutrients, and has the right amount of water. The olive tree is completely dependent on its caregiver, but with expert care and nutrients, an olive tree will produce an abundant crop. The same can be said of God's children. He is our expert Caregiver. This is something David learned, and like David, we can flourish and can be fruitful because of the great attention God gives us as we trust in His unfailing love.

Read Psalm 139:13.

How specifically is God qualified to be our expert?

God formed us and created our inmost being. This qualifies Him as an expert on all things concerning our development. As we accept His care, drink His Water (John 7:38) and digest His Word, the Bread of Life (John 1:1, 1:14, 6:51), we will produce an abundant crop.

The Bottom Line

It comes back to the "t" word again: trust. David's carefree confidence demonstrates that God's loving-kindness will not fall short of his expectations and never let him down. This assurance has given him the right view of God, the right view of self, and the ability to leave all the "Doegs" of the world in His capable of hands. How is your view?

Psalm 52



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

Word Study Wednesday – Notes from Word Study

Thankful Thursday – Praise God for something He has done for you.

Faith Stretching/Faith Strengthening Friday – How is your faith being strengthened/stretched?

About Wendy



Wendy is a wife to Scott, mother to Blaire and Griffin, author, speaker, and Bible study teacher. Whether in the pulpit or on paper her passion is Biblical application. Wendy leads women all over the world to life change through her in-depth online Bible studies. She is witty and down-to-earth, and transparent in her teaching so that every woman feels that she is speaking directly to their heart.

She loves lazy Sundays watching golf with her husband, thrift store shopping with her daughter, and eating Bojangles with her son. Wendy's bucket list includes being the murder mystery to solve on CSI-Vegas and holding the hush-board on the 16th green on Sunday afternoon at the Masters.

She's the author of *Trusting God for a Better Tomorrow*, *Out of the Mouths of Babes*, contributing author to *God's Purpose for Every Woman*, *The Reason We Speak*, *Encouragement for Today Devotional* and *The Real Life Devotional Bible for Women* (NIV).

If you are interested in having Wendy lead your next event, visit www.wendypope.org/speaking or contact her speaking coordinator at Proverbs 31 Ministries at 1-877-731-4663.

About Proverbs 31 Ministries

If you were inspired by *Read Thru the Word* and desire to deepen your own personal relationship with Jesus Christ, I encourage you to connect with Proverbs 31 Ministries.

Proverbs 31 Ministries exists to be a trusted friend who will take you by the hand and walk by your side, leading you one step closer to the heart of God through:

- Free online daily devotions
- Daily radio program
- Books and resources
- Online Bible Studies
- COMPEL Writers Training www.compeltraining.com

To learn more about Proverbs 31 Ministries or to inquire about having *Wendy* speak at your event, call 877-731-4663 or visit www.Proverbs31.org.

Proverbs 31 Ministries
630 Team Rd., Suite 100
Matthews, NC 28105
www.Proverbs31.org