



Trusting God
For A
Better Tomorrow

Psalm 53-69 Journal

Wendy Pope

Psalm 53

Author: David

God often repeats Himself in Scripture, not necessarily because we are not listening, but to make sure we truly understand what He is looking for from His children. When we truly understand Him, we can obey Him, and live the full adventure of faith He has planned for us. Psalm 53 is an example of a repeat. David penned almost the same exact words in Psalm 14—a message worth repeating is a message worth heeding.

Place a bookmark in Psalm 53, and then turn to Psalm 14.

How are these two psalms different? _____

David says in Psalm 14:2, David says, “The Lord looks down,” and Psalm 53:2 he says, “God looks down.” So we see God represented in two different ways. He is Lord, Jehovah, in Psalm 14, representing the personal nature of God and His great power. Yet in Psalm 53, He is God, Elohyim, representing the Creator of Heaven and Earth and the one, true God. The personal God and Creator God look down to see if *any* understand and seek Him.

Am I An *Any*?

Any is a pronoun in these verses. It is defined as an unspecified person or persons—anybody, or anyone. Can you picture this? Jehovah God, the Creator, looks down on the Earth that He created, at the people He created, desperately looking for anyone, anybody, any one person who understands and seeks Him. Can you hear Him say, “Anyone? Anybody?”

Any Who Understand

God was desperate to find anyone who has an understanding of the law and the divine and of spiritual things. In the day of David, obedience to the Law of Moses and the Ceremonial Law were paramount to receiving God’s blessing and favor. God could see from His throne that His people had forgotten their promise to do everything the Lord said.

Jesus’ death released us from the Law (Rm.7:6), but God still searches for any who will obey Him and understand. How can we obey what we don’t understand? How do we understand what He wants us to know? Both are great and puzzling questions. The answer to the first question is found in Psalm 46 in our Bible.

Read Psalm 46:10.

How can we know God? _____

Be still? Who can really be still? Girls, we can, and we must. Finding joy in our faith adventure with God depends on being still. The liberty we are meant to experience and the strength that can be ours, depends on our being still. And we can be still—because the God who wants us to be still, created time for us to be still!

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1.

What did God create?

Do you have time to know and understand? In being still my friend, you can.

Any Who Seek

Read Jeremiah 29:13.

When we seek Him, what will we find?

How are we to seek Him?

God wants to be found. I love this thought! But this thought also challenges me. Personally, I do many things with all my heart. I am competitive at games. I put everything into mothering my children, caring for our home, and serving in ministry. Jeremiah 29:13 presents a challenging question: do I seek God with the same vigor and determination in which I seek other things in my life?

What do you seek with all your heart?

Several years ago, in an attempt to change the direction of my unhappy, happily-ever-after life, I began to spend time seeking God. Reflecting back on that season makes me chuckle, almost out loud. I had no idea *how* to seek God, nor did I realize what it meant. What I did know was that I was miserable, and I had tried other things—with all my heart—and got a zero return on my investment.

So I begin to pray a simple prayer: “Lord, help me love you,” and then I added, “Satisfy me in the morning with your unfailing love that I might sing for joy and be glad all my days.” (Psalm 90:14) Do you know what He did? He answered me.

Read Hebrews 11:6.

What does God do for those who earnestly seek Him?

The blessings for those who are willing to be an “any” are too abundant to count. What if *everyone* would decide to be an *anyone*? I marvel at the prospect of what such a decision would have on me, and what God, our Creator, would see when He looked down on me.

Psalm 53



Message Monday – Notes from Video Teaching

Truth Tuesday – What truth is God currently teaching you?

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

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

Psalm 54

Author: David

As I read today's Psalm, I cannot help but wonder how often I narrowly escape the grasp of my enemy and how close I have come to defeat because of someone who was threatened by God's presence.

Read Psalm 139:7.

How does this Scripture affirm God's protection?

Read Hebrews 13:5b.

What does God promise to help us be sure of His protection?

From the moment David received his anointing (1 Samuel 16), until his death, David enjoyed very little peace. He seemed to be always on the run from his enemies. David knew the agony of defeat, the pain of betrayal, and the deception of being double-crossed. David was betrayed, not once but twice, by the very people he defended. In the wilderness of Ziph, while feeling low and vulnerable, David cries out to God, and God responds. David declares. "Save me, O God, by Your name [renown]. Vindicate me by Your might."

Read 1 Samuel 23:14.

How do we know God heard David's cries?

To whom do you cry when you are deep in the wilderness of your "Ziph?" Take a minute to honestly answer this question.

I wish I could say that, without a doubt, my cry for help is similar to David's. But in reality, my cry is usually something like this: "I can't believe this. I have to figure this out. What will others think of me? What should I do?"

Did you notice how many times I used the pronoun "I?" Did you notice whose shoulder I placed the outcome of my trouble upon? "I" have it all wrong. Am I alone?

Speaker and author, Louie Giglio, breaks this truth down into very simple terms in his book, *I Am Not but I Know I Am: Welcome to the Story of God*, on pages 38-40.

I am not the center of everything.

I am not in control.

I am not the solution.

I am not all-powerful.

I am not calling the shots.

I am not the owner of anything.

I am not the Lord.

I am not the solution. I am not calling the shots. I am not the Lord. I am not.

What is your reaction to this “*I am not*” list?

This list helps me maintain the right perspective. Every now and then I need a healthy dose of reality: my story is not about me! The outcome of my crisis is not up to me. Even though God has gifted me, I do not call the shots or have to have all the answers. I really don't control anything. And because I am so easily deceived, every now and then, it is necessary for me to remind myself who I am *not*. Like me, I wonder if David was trying to maintain his perspective when he said “Your Name and Your might.”

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31.

What does this verse tell us about a healthy perspective?

When our perspective becomes skewed and turns to us instead of God, we become takers rather than givers, prideful rather than humble, and stingy rather than generous. We begin to think, *we are* rather than *we are not*s.

How do we keep the right perspective? In this me-first, gotta-have-mine, it's-all-about-me world, how to make sure God remains in charge He has given us all the answers we need.

Look up each verse, and write a personalized summary of it in the space provided.

Read Deuteronomy 6:5.

Read Matthew 6:33.

Read John 3:30.

Psalm 54



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Psalm 55

Author: David

Wounds inflicted by a friend's betrayal run deep and are difficult to heal. Cutting even deeper, and leaving wounds that never completely heal, is the betrayal of a child. One can easily identify with David's brokenness and sympathize with his plight. But who are these friends—and this child—and what did they have against David?

Read 2 Samuel 23:34.

Who was Ahithophel's father?

Read 2 Samuel 11:3.

Who was Eliam?

What reason would Ahithophel have for betraying David?

David has suffered double betrayal. The first wound—of treason—was exacted on him by his son, Absalom. Absalom felt his father's response to the rape of his sister fell short of justice (2 Samuel 13:1-22). The second wound—again of treason—occurred when his top advisor, Ahithophel, the grandfather of David's wife, Bathsheba, joined forces with Absalom to overthrow his dynasty.

Absalom and Ahithophel each felt justified in righting a wrong. Each was waiting for just the right time to seek revenge. And each lost his life righting the wrong.

Let's be honest, we can easily identify with the feelings of Absalom and Ahithophel. Each of us has our own wrongs that we would like to be avenged. But the price for revenge can be very, very high. So how can we avoid the seduction of revenge and live in peace with the hurt of betrayal?

Revenge Has No Fury like an Angry Granddaddy

Absalom watched in agony as his sister Tamar suffered the trauma of being raped. He carried the offense of his sister's betrayal, and let it eat him up. Years passed, and real reconciliation never came to pass. And then Ahithophel watched his granddaughter's marriage be destroyed by adultery and murder. Obviously, in the case of Absalom and Ahithophel, *time does not heal all wounds*.

The root of revenge is anger—unchecked anger. The first point, on the subject of revenge, is to know that anger must be resolved. The resolution should be with God's help, and if possible, with the one who opposes us.

Read Ephesians 4:26-27.

What is the result of unchecked anger?

Read Proverbs 14:29.

What is the result of checked anger?

A godly response to pain goes beyond human power. It is spiritual and gives us the power to sit back and do nothing instead of taking revenge. Our natural impulse to the pain of betrayal says, "Hurt them as much or more than they hurt you." And the world whispers, "You should get yours! You deserve restitution."

Read Romans 12:19.

What instructions are we given concerning revenge? Who repays those who harm us?

We need to step back and give God room to take His righteous revenge. When we stay too close to the situation and try to exact our own revenge, we crowd God out and thwart His work. In reality, when we respond to our impulses and make no room for God, we align ourselves with the likes of Absalom and Ahithophel.

A Shift of Allegiance

Ahithophel had been one of David's top advisors, but he was coerced into conspiring with Absalom. He shifted his allegiance and quickly became an enemy to the very one who was once his friend. Loyalty is a powerful thing. When the eyes of our allegiance are blurred by something other than God, trouble will follow. It is impossible to serve two masters (Luke 16:13). In haste, we take matters in our own hands rather than leave them in the right ones, God's hands.

Wrong Thinking

Wrong thinking leads to wrong doing and naturally follows a shift in allegiance. In thinking, we are "all that and a bag of chips," our focus shifts to us rather than to God, and what we can do, rather than what He will do. We simply compromise the discipline of waiting on His revenge when we succumb to our impulses to seek revenge on our own.

Read Psalm 147:6.

What does God do for the humble? What does He do to those who oppose them?

In remembering who He is and who we are, we create a place for both victory and revenge—but in His perfect timing. In doing so, we bear witness to His work and learn to trust Him more and more, battle after battle.

Psalm 55



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Psalm 56

Author: David

David has fled to the enemy territory of Gath, home to the Philistines. This is the one place David knew Saul would not come. Isn't it ironic? Sometimes we feel the safest in enemy territory. David's own country, who once gave him refuge, has turned against him and is now the enemy. So now we find David, the giant-killing, victorious warrior, and soon-to-be king, dealing with the very real emotion of fear.

When I Am Afraid

David said "*when* I am afraid," not *if* I am afraid. Like David, admitting fear is the first step in not becoming its victim. With age, we are somehow supposed to outgrow being afraid and be able to conquer anything. Yet this giant-killing, victorious warrior, and soon-to-be king has given us permission to admit our fear but not be overtaken by it, and instead, turn to God.

Read Isaiah 41:10.

What does God tell His children not to do? _____

What does God tell His children He *will* do? _____

Feed your faith, and your fears will starve to death.

-Author Unknown

My first experience flying the friendly skies was at the tender age of thirty-five. My philosophy on air travel was: if God meant for me to fly, He would have given me wings. The thought of flying then—and still to this day—makes me quiver. My husband, however, feels quite comfortable flying. My husband's job requires significant air travel. So, until a few short years ago, my biggest fear was losing my husband in a plane crash. I feared being a young widow. Just typing these words makes me shudder. Back then, fear consumed me each time I watched him walk through the doors labeled "Departures". It depleted me of energy and of clarity of mind. I had allowed my fears to starve me rather than my faith to sustain me.

God's truth is the nourishment for our faith. We feed our faith, and we starve our fears, with every Truth we digest. The answer for my "young widow" fear will mostly like apply to your greatest fear as well.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:5.

What does Paul tell us to do with every thought?

Fear sets itself up against God's Word and pretends to be true. But our fears are demolished when we make them obey God's Word. This pretend truth did not tell me my "young widow" fear would not come to fruition. God's truth told me *not to fear* (Isaiah 41:10). Moreover, He said He would not only *strengthen me* but would *hold me up*. So I fed my faith and made my fear bow to *His* truth.

You try it. Starve your fear, and indulge your faith. What's the result?

**How very little can be done under the spirit of fear.
~Florence Nightingale**

How true, Mrs. Nightingale, how true! When our faith is starved, and our fear is nourished our productivity becomes paralyzed. Yielding to a spirit of fear prevents us from accomplishing daily responsibilities and participating in Kingdom change. A spirit of fear is *not* of God. Rather, it is a tool in the enemy's arsenal that he uses to achieve his agenda for our life. Thankfully, our paralysis is reversed when we act upon what God has given us.

Write down 2 Timothy 1:7 from the NLT on the lines below. (You can use biblegateway.com) Then put a line through what God *does not* give. Circle what He *does* give.

Notice that the list of what God *gives* is larger than the list of what does *not give*. Let's feed our faith with all that God has freely given and starve our fear.

**Fear: False Evidence Appearing Real.
~Author Unknown**

Though lots of false evidence surrounded David, he made the decision to trust in God. Our enemy will present false evidence to invoke fear, and that fear will cause us to doubt God's love and protection. Our enemy is a master of making evidence appear real. Like a rear view mirror distorts the proximity of approaching cars, fear distorts what is actually read in an attempt to weaken our faith.

Read Hebrews 11:1.
What does faith tell us?

Even though false evidence may appear real, and overwhelming, we don't have to allow it to overtake us. What we don't see, rather Who we don't see, erases the false truths we might tend to believe. Our God—who we don't see—is greater than all we may perceive. It is easy to believe a lie like, "Fear means you don't have faith." But author Max Lucado offers this thought: "The presence of fear does not mean you have no faith. Fear visits everyone. But make your fear a visitor and not a resident."

But how do we get rid of fear? Fear is cast out by the perfect love (1 John 4:18) of our Savior and by capturing our thoughts and then aligning them with truth of His Word. With these truths in our arsenal, we can send fear packing!

Psalm 56



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Cave dwelling would surely get old after a while, don't you think? David has fled from Gath and taken up residence in the Cave of Adullam (1 Sam.22:1-2). Interestingly enough, *Adullam* means refuge, but David's real refuge is in the shadow of the wings of his God (verse 1). Here David is confident that His Refuge will keep him safe *until* the disaster passes (verse 1). So David seeks mercy [gracious favor] for his soul, from the One who defined and determined his purpose years before, on the hillside of Bethlehem.

His Purpose

When it seems your life is on the slippery slope of disaster rather than frolicking through Rebecca's Sunnyside farm, it is hard to trust and believe in a verse like Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Let's face it; it is difficult to understand how hard times can be part of a loving God's plan.

I want to share some verses that have helped me believe and trust even when I did not understand. But first, we need to look at few people who can teach us a thing or two about the slippery slopes of disaster.

Read Genesis 50:20.

What did God do with all the harm and disaster that came to Joseph?

Read Job 42:10, 12.

What was God's response to Job after his plummet over the slippery slope?

Read Joshua 6:17.

What did God do for Rahab when she faced disaster?

Two more verses, and I am sure there are more, will help us wrap our finite minds around God's infinite plan. In the midst of trials and heartache, like David, we need to remind ourselves what we know to be true of God (VS 2-3). Truth is the anchor that keeps us from sliding too far down the slope, and will give us the strength we need to pull ourselves back up again.

Read Isaiah 55:8.

How does this verse comfort us when trials and heartache come?

Read Romans 8:28.

What does God do for those who are called according to His purpose?

Might I suggest you write these lifeline verses on index cards? Make multiple copies. Keep a set with you, in your Bible, on your desk, taped to your mirror, and anywhere else you frequent. Use them to write your own personal prayer. These lifeline verses will be an anchor and strength to you when you find yourself “caved in at Adullam,” and when you find it difficult to trust and believe that His plan is good even if it brings sorrow and suffering.

We have established that God divinely causes or permits disaster to bring about His purpose in our life. His sovereign plan uses what He divinely knows is for our good. In the process of taking in and understanding all this divine sovereignty and purpose, it is easy to pause, falter, and wonder, “Is He *really* on my side?” Rest assured, even when disaster follows disaster, we can count on God’s commitment to His plan for our life. But how can we know for sure? The Bible tells us so.

Read Romans 8:31.

Who is God for? Personalize your answer. _____

Read Philippians 1:6.

What kind of work is God doing in your life? _____

What does this verse tell us about God’s commitment to His work plan?

God *is* for us. His work *is* good. And He *is* faithful to complete His good work. That is good news! Unfortunately, this news is so good that we might be tempted to help God out and find our own way out of disastrous situations, and thus run ahead of God.

The truth is our efforts to accomplish His purpose are pointless. I am so thankful that God never allows our overzealous efforts to thwart His purpose. When I have put that point to the test, I have received His grace-filled whispers sweetly saying, “slow down” or “wait!” We just don’t have to—nor should we—be in a hurry to carry out His purpose.

Read Psalm 33:11.

What stands firm throughout generations?

Our greatest purpose is to know Him and make Him known. At the end of this life, will it really matter how many degrees we earned, the level of success we achieved, or the number of material possessions we owned? Rick Warren said it best in his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, “Real meaning and significance comes from understanding and fulfilling *God’s purposes* for putting us on earth.”

Let’s be challenged to live out our great purposes.

Psalm 57



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Psalm 58

Author: David

Bible scholars might not agree when Psalm 58 was written, but they do agree that David is upset. Justice, righteousness, and order have left Israel. So David condemns righteous talk and mocks the unjust execution of justice. Does any of this sound familiar? Righteous talk? Unjust execution of the law? The first two verses could have been taken from our local newspaper.

Thankfully, I have read the end of *The Book*. Praise God that justice prevails! Truth defeats lies! Death is swallowed in victory!

Read Revelation 19: 11-12 for a sneak peek.

Who rides in to see that justice prevails, truth wins, and death dies?

In the meantime, until Faithful and True rides up in the white horse, what do we do?

Read Micah 6:8. Write the verse in the space below.

Act justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly with your God. God lays it out in a simple 1-2-3 format.

Act Justly

God expects His children to do right by others, to treat everyone fairly. He feels so strongly about the idea that He mentions it again in Luke 6:31: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” It sounds so simplistic, doesn’t it? But pause for a moment, and imagine what this world would be like if all God’s children would act justly toward each other, as well as those who are not followers of Christ.

Read Ephesians 4:32.

How else does God expect us to treat others?

Be kind. Be compassionate. Forgive. Not only should we treat everyone this way, but we should also stand up and fight when someone is not treated well. It is our responsibility to stand against wrong. As Americans, we have electoral power. As Christian Americans, it is our responsibility to use our vote to give power to judges and government officials who believe in God and in His ways of kindness, compassion, and justice.

Love Mercy

Micah says that you should love kindness so much that you want to show it. Find kind things to do for others—people you know, people you don’t know, people who deserve it, and people who don’t.

In 2000, the movie, *Pay it Forward* hit the big screen. The story is about a boy who was determined to change the world with random simple acts of kindness. The movie sparked a phenomenon of doing random acts of kindness.

This phenomenon led our local Christian radio station to start *The Drive-Thru Difference* campaign. An individual in the fast-food drive-thru line of a restaurant pays for the order of the person behind them. Instead of taking money, the cashier hands the recipient a *Drive-Thru Difference* certificate. Don't you know that God smiles when He sees such an act of loving-kindness? Doing something nice, just for the sake of doing something nice, what is quite a concept! So here's a challenge for you: Randomly and anonymously do something kind for another person today.

Walk Humbly With Your God

Read James 4:6.

Who does God oppose? Who receives God's grace?

I would like to be in the line for some God grace, wouldn't you? To do this, we must determine to keep things real with God, and let Him do His job without our assistance. Then we will receive His grace and avoid His opposition. When we walk humbly with our God, we keep our perspective about Who is in charge.

Read Deuteronomy 10:12-13.

How should we walk, love, and serve the Lord?

What else?

We can take a huge first step to make things better until Faithful and True rides in save the day by living out the truth of Micah 6:8. The second step is to pray.

We can pray to be humble, to have grace to faithfully seek God's face, and to humbly turn from our wicked ways (2 Chronicles 7:14-15). We, as the body of Christ, can change our world by acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God. How cool is that?

Psalm 58



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Psalm 59

Author: David

Sometimes the enemy walks right through the front door. David is at home after dodging a sword Saul hurled at him as he played the harp. Saul's troops are stationed outside his house waiting to follow orders to kill him (1 Sam.19:1-10). Michal, David's wife and Saul's daughter, discovers the plot and warns David. With her help, David climbs out the window narrowly escaping the troops as they enter the house (1 Sam.19:11-17).

Have you noticed how often David prays for deliverance? What a great example for us! Life is not easy and needs constant prayer.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17-19.

How often should we pray? What else should do?

Without hardships, would we pray continually? David practiced the truth of 1 Thessalonians, both the praying and praising, long before Paul ever penned the words. He demonstrates full confidence in his deliverance whether it was immediate or eventual.

Immediate Deliverance

The Hebrew word for deliverance is *natsal* (naw-tsal) and means to snatch away, rescue, save, and strip. David was snatched away from the impending danger of Saul's troops. It was immediate. The Psalm is a praise for his immediate deliverance and a prayer for permanent deliverance.

He longed be free from the threat of danger. Looking over his shoulder (verse 3) and living life on the defense had gotten old. He took his concerns to his Deliverer. David confirms his confidence in God's deliverance in verse 9, repeating it in verse 17.

Write verse 9 in the space below.

David is so sure his deliverance will come that he makes a commitment to watch for it. What a great word for those who live in the uncertainty of an egg-shell world, carefully watching each step taken and word spoken as to not upset the situation. "O Strength, I will watch for you. [I know you will deliver me if not immediately, eventually.]

If you are currently in need of deliverance, pause and cry out this prayer to your Deliverer. Perhaps you have experienced God's delivery. Pause and praise Him for His watchful care of your life.

Read Exodus 15:11.

Write the attributes of our Deliverer.

Eventual Deliverance

Perhaps for our greater good, and God's glory, an *eventual* rather than *immediate* deliverance is best. The truth of Jeremiah 29:11 is just as trustworthy when our circumstances are ideal as it is when our circumstances are less than ideal.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

This is our hope: God's plans are always good! During times of eventual deliverance and when we are tempted to believe something other than the truth. This has be to our go-to script

Lies

God does not care about you.
God has forgotten about you.
You will die waiting here. Take action.

Truth

God's plans are always good.
God's plans are always good.
God's plans are always good.

Making this statement of truth part of our belief system will make our eventual deliverance bearable. God's Word is powerful. It does not return void and will accomplish what it sets out to accomplish (Is.55:11).

Deliver Me

When I hear the word or any variation of the word *deliver* my mind conjures stories of individuals in perilous situations. Not all deliverance is related to physical danger and life-threatening circumstances.

This concept was foreign to me until a few years ago when a friend had a request for deliverance from something that was keeping her from surrendering her life fully to Christ. She was not in physical danger but her weakness threatened her spiritual life. My friend was held captive by habitual sin. She did not ask for us to pray for the power to resist the sin. She wanted to be delivered, snatched away and completely removed from its grip.

When we are trapped in a mine of sin, we can boldly ask God to deliver us. We have the power to ask and He has the power to deliver. Contrary to a popular school of thought, asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Read Hebrews 4:16.

What will we receive and find as we approach God with confidence?

Psalm 59



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Psalm 60

Author: David

David is finally king over all of Israel (2 Sam.5:3). He is at the height of military success, having defeated the Philistines, forces of Hadadezer, Arameans, and the Edomites (2 Sam.8:1-14). Yet, David feels rejection from God. With a hint of sarcasm in his tone, he suggests God led him into battle with a raised banner only to allow him to experience defeat (verse 4).

Deliberate Defeat

Read Judges 2:15.

Does God deliberately allow defeat in the lives of His children? _____

What did God allow the Israelites to experience? _____

Defeat is most often experienced as a result of disobedience. Just like teachers expect their students to obey, God expects His children to obey. There are no excuses for disobedience, only consequences. In our previous lesson, we determined God's plans are always good. Since this is our truth, there is no reason not to obey Him, especially if the result could lead to defeat.

The Why

My son, since he was old enough to walk and talk, has pushed the limits of obedience. When I tell him to do something, in most cases he has a better way, an addition to my way that would make it better, or a first-rate reason for not doing what I told him to do.

He learned to ride a bicycle earlier than most kids learned to ride a big-wheel. He was proud of himself, but stubborn and set in his way when it came to wearing shoes. I would tell him to wear shoes and he would, while I was watching. But as soon as my back was turned, the shoes came off. Every other day I recited the rule as I cleaned and bandaged bloody toes. Eventually he figured out that if he obeyed the rule, he would not have bloody toes. He learned the value of obedience.

Why Number 1: To Teach the Value of Obedience

Without defeat we would never know the value of obedience. My son had to experience the agony of bloody toes and the pain of reopening wounds (i.e. defeat) before he could fully understand the "wear shoes when you ride your bike" rule was a valuable guideline.

Read Psalm 16:6.

Where do God's boundary lines fall?

This is another truth we should allow to sink deep into our belief system: God does not set guidelines and boundaries so we will miss out on something. His guidelines and boundaries are for our protection and to help us enjoy our delightful inheritance of eternal life.

Read Psalm 84:11.

What does God withhold from those who walk in completeness with Him?

Why Number 2: To See He knows Best

My Griffin is 14 now and has learned that momma knows best. From completing his school project before it is due to finishing his chores right away so he can play when his friends come over, he has grown to appreciate my wisdom. Does he always apply said wisdom? Not hardly. But in the core of his thinking he knows my wisdom is good for him.

God knows what is best for us. He permits defeat so we will pause and return to Him. His hope is for us to run to Him in our brokenness and pain so that He could share His wisdom as He bandages wounds. He knows we cannot fully understand His ways but He longs for us trust His them (Isaiah 55:8).

Read James 4:10.

Who does God lift up? And when?

Why Number 3: To Draw Us Back to Him

Each time my son tore up his toes, he ran to me. He knew I would wipe his tears, calm his fears, and bandage his wounds. He also knew with love, firm authority, and a hint of “I told you so” I would repeat the rule. (OK. Sometimes there was more than a hint. Sometimes I said the actual words.)

David knew God would repair the brokenness of Israel and His anger would only last for a moment (Psalm. 30:5).

Read Psalm 30:5.

What lasts a lifetime? _____

We can count on momentary anger and a lifetime of favor from our loving God. Restoration is always available no matter what we do. Isn't His grace amazing? Let's proclaim this the year of the Lord's favor (Luke.4:19) and live undefeated!

Psalm 60



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Psalm 61

Author: David

David is in exile and is calling to God from what feels like “ends of the earth”. Commentaries suggest David could have composed this song when he was exiled from Jerusalem during his son Absalom revolt. The result of the revolt was two-fold for King David. On one hand, his crown persevered but on the other, his son is dead.

From the Ends of the Earth-Physically

Have you ever been physically far from home for a long period of time? Maybe your situation was like David’s and your exit was a matter of survival, or perhaps your exit was a personal choice. For whatever reason, when we leave, a part of our heart stays behind. David is alone and his heart longs for home. No matter where we go, or why, we are never out of the reach of our Heavenly Father. David knew God would hear “from the ends of the earth.”

Read Psalm 139:7.

What does David ask God?

Read Psalm 139:8-10.

What is God’s answer?

What a comforting thought! We can’t go anywhere without God’s knowledge.

From the Ends of the Earth-Spiritually

Spiritual exile occurs when we determine to reject God’s Spirit and Presence. With each decision we make apart from His wisdom and guidance the farther we move from Him spiritually. We eventually are unable to hear His shouts, much less His whispers. In addition, each time we sin, we separate ourselves from God. We conclude because we have moved away from God, He would not possibly want us back. Friends, God does not run out of grace.

His grace was sufficient enough for a murderer named Moses (Ex.2:12). The mighty King David, a known murderer and adulterer found God’s grace to be enough. Rahab (Josh.6:25), a prostitute did not out-sin the grace of God. Paul, formerly Saul and prosecutor of those who followed Yahweh God had a word or two to say about the grace he received.

Read 1 Timothy 1: 13-15. Write in the space below the saying Paul says is trustworthy.

Paul considered him the worst of all sinners. Maybe we have not said these exact words, but I feel confident in saying we all have thought them or words similar. His grace covers all our sin and restores us to abound in good work.

From the Ends of the Earth-Emotionally

Emotional exile transpires over time as a result of what we might consider bad things God has done or allowed to happen to us. Bad things like: our child not being healed from a terminal disease, the financial ruin despite the prayers, the disillusion of our marriage even after counseling or the silence of innocence through a violent crime. This list can go on.

If we are not careful, such events can send us into emotional overdraft. Like writing checks from a bank account with no money, we go through life giving and giving when our emotional bank becomes depleted. Our lives are set on auto-pilot as we move through life disconnected with God as well as others.

David has found himself in a place of emotional exile. His heart is faint. I've been there. Have you? Perhaps you are there now. Our God, the same God to whom David cried out to centuries ago has a word for us today.

Read Matthew 11:28-20.

What does He say? What will He do?

How do we receive what He is offering?

We receive the emotional rest and recharge our soul needs by simply exchanging the yoke of our depleted emotional account with the yoke of His love, grace, and mercy. Now that sounds like a great trade!

The Return

How long does it take to return from exile? Freedom is dependent upon the level of desperation of the one in exile. Come to God. Cry out to God. He loves you too much to leave you in exile.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:8.

Write it below and circle the word *all*.

Enough said. Thanks Paul!

Psalm 61



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Finding Rest

I'm a talker and very, very busy. I always have been. Even as a child, when report cards were sent home, my parents never expected anything better than a "C" beside the word *Conduct*. One of my elementary teachers politely called me "very social", while most were blunt and to the point. "Wendy talks too much. She could learn more if she would talk less."

Wendy still talks too much and would learn more if she would talk less. Unfortunately, old habits die hard. I have brought this irritating trait into my fellowship with God, filling our time with words, lots and lots of words. In my world, silence is rare. I wonder if the Father sometimes looks at the Son and says, "I can't get a word in edge-wise with this girl!!"

Read Psalm 46:10.

When we are still, what will we discover?

The reward in *being still* is to know that God is God. We simply need relief from the rush of life—relief from rocky relationships, job requirements, rearing children, and running from here to there and everywhere. God is willing to give us relief from the rush of life, but all too often we resist.

Resisting Rest

The word, *Rest*, in the original Hebrew, is defined as *wait in silence*. The King James translation says it so poetically, "my soul waiteth upon God, from Him cometh my salvation [deliverance, help, victory]." When you read the verse aloud, the "-th" brings a certain peace and calm, don't you think? Try it. If the words can offer peace by just reading them, imagine what obeying them can bring. Yet, we resist waiting and resting and silence. Waiting in silence requires two disciplines—two difficult disciplines—sitting and silence.

Sitting

In addition to not being able to shut my mouth as young child, I was also unable to sit still. I was too busy being social and taking care of business. Not much has changed since I've become an adult. I am busy taking care of business with very little time to sit still. There is just so much to do. Life is busy and demanding.

At times, we resist resting and sitting with God. Sometimes this is a result of fear. For those who are trapped in the captivity of activity, real rest for the soul is an unknown, and the unknown can be scary. When we sit still with God, we get to know Him. And in knowing God, we discover the reasons for our restlessness and learn the how-tos of overcoming them.

Read Matthew 11:28-30.

Who does Jesus say can come to Him? What will this person find?

Silence

Silence is deafening, and like *being still*, can be scary. However, our souls cannot receive the rest they need until our mouths stop moving! This kind of discipline is extremely challenging for those like me who feel they have to be moving or talking all the time. We have a saying around our house, “You can’t listen if you’re talking.” That is true with listening—or talking—with God.

God has been teaching me this discipline for many years, but the past few months have been especially difficult. My normal way of spending time with God has changed, and I am slowly becoming fond of the new normal. My past quiet times were full of words, but in my new normal, I find that words fail me—and the silence is haunting. So I question, “What’s wrong with me Lord? I love you, but I have nothing to say.” Then my spirit receives His response, “Be still, and be quiet. It’s OK. Just be still, and know that I am God.”

Read Psalm 23:1-3.

List four things the Lord does for us?

The Lord makes us lie down (be still). After He has our undivided attention, He will lead and guide us away from “false refreshers” to places that are truly refreshing to our soul.

False Refreshers

When we are weary, we often seek refreshment in the wrong places. One of my favorite “false refreshers” is lunch with my friends. Is lunch with friends a bad thing? Absolutely not, and I love lunch with my girlfriends. However, the refreshment and the rest that having lunch with friends provides for my soul is temporary.

In contrast, God’s rest is real and lasting. Since our soul was created for His rest, it responds with joy and fullness. And as we fill the reservoir of our soul with the true refreshment of God, we learn about His unforced rhythms of grace, and we experience the freedom of His ways. Our soul finds the rest that it has never known, but hungers for, by learning to be *still* and *silent*.

“We receive only when we are recollected; only in silence is heard the beating of the heart of God.” —Father Bernardo Olivera

Psalm 62



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Psalm 63

Author: David

After being forced to leave by his son's Absalom's revolt (2 Samuel 15:1-12), David penned these words in the dry and weary desert lands surrounding his home of Judah. The dry desert most certainly caused David to have a physical thirst, and his desperation for water has caused him to recognize his spiritual thirst and his longing for his Lord. I wonder which would be worse—having spiritual thirst that could not be satisfied, or having no spiritual thirst at all.

Not Thirsty At All

For many years, each Sunday morning and most Wednesday nights you would find me in church. Then on Thursday mornings or on Sunday nights, I would lead women's Bible studies. I was faithful, but I was not thirsty. Though I was saved, I had never truly tasted the good ways of God. I realized that it is simply impossible to thirst for something you have never really tasted.

Our salvation and our church involvement alone do not make us thirsty for the Lord. If they did, our churches would be full to capacity and we would need to build more. Budgets would have a surplus, and every people group in the world would have a missionary among them to share the Gospel. You must recognize your need and ask to be filled.

Yet I had no spiritual thirst for the Lord, or His Word, or His ways—until I asked for it. Over a decade ago, I attended a women's conference that finally made me thirsty. I witnessed women worshiping God with radiant tear-stained faces. They loved God passionately, and that love birthed genuine worship in this long-time pew warmer. I left the event with a holy jealousy and a new thirst for what those women had.

Like any jealous girl, I came home and told my Daddy God that I wanted exactly what those other girls had. I began to pray that I would love God as much as those women did. And my answer was, "Yes!" because, when we pray in accordance with God's Word and God's will, our Daddy always says yes.

Read Matthew 5:6.

What happens for those who thirst for righteousness?

Those who have a thirst for God will be filled. And the more you thirst for God, the more you want of God. You just gotta have more! Whether God has delivered you from the desert to pure thirst-quenching delight, or if you are still in the desert, like David, pause and praise Him.

Spiritual Thirst—Unsatisfied

In this Psalm, David is experiencing worship withdrawal. He is forced to leave, not only his home, but also the Temple where he regularly worshipped God. Now he can no longer hear the Temple choir sing or hear the instruments played. With his whole body and soul, he longs for God's house and worship. So he calls out to God early in the morning (vs.1) and through

the watches of the night (vs.6). His spirit is as dry as the sand in the desert that he now calls home.

Was it possible for David to worship God in the desert? Yes, and he does. We can worship God whenever and wherever we are, yet there is something powerful about worshipping in God's house with God's people.

A few years ago, my travel schedule kept me from my home church for several Sundays. When I returned home, I became ill, and then I shared the illness with my children. Before I knew it, six weeks had passed before I was able to get back to church. I remembered, and identified with, David's words in verse one. My thirst could not truly be satisfied until I finally got to the Lord's house to participate in corporate worship.

Read Psalm 84:10.

Where would David rather be than anywhere else?

In this dry, sandy, and barren land, David's mind thinks of praising God. His praise gives his body life, his spirit hope, and his mind focus. In our life, we will know some desert experiences like David's. There will be times when we are exiled from our normal life to the dry and barren land of not normal. In those desert times, praise will give our body life, our spirit hope, and our mind focus.

Spiritual Thirst—Satisfied

Are you thirsty for spiritual things? Do you long to say, "better is one day in your courts" and "I have been in the sanctuary and beheld Your power and glory?" Boy, in the wilderness places of my life, I sure do. In those times, when we cry out in our thirst, God offers us a drink that will never leave us thirsty.

Read John 4:13-14.

What is the result of drinking the water Jesus offers?

This water of life is available through a personal relationship Jesus Christ. Anyone who confesses, "Lord, I believe" will be saved (Romans 10:9). When you recognize your need and ask for it to be filled, your thirst of salvation will be satisfied, as you love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5). Then this water will not only satisfy your own thirst, it will well up within you and spill out onto others. You will become a fountain of living water from which others can drink.

Perhaps you have already said, "Lord, I believe," but you are just not thirsty. Yet you want to be. My friend, our God is just as ready to fill you up as He did David—and me. Just seek Him. Ask Him. He is more than willing to meet you in your dry and weary land.

Psalm 63



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Psalm 64

Author: David

David's life was one of conflict and very little peace. Like him, living God's plan for your life is a blessing, but it is not promised to be trouble-free. God surrounds His children with His Presence, power, and provision, but He never promises life without problems. In this Psalm, David has had just about all he can take, so he voices his complaint to God.

Prayer of Complaint

The Complaint Department is one place that I would never want to work. By the time an individual reaches the Complaint Department, he or she usually has already tried and failed to solve the problem and are ready to talk with someone in charge, often with an angry voice. It takes a special kind of person to hear, and solve, problems. Frankly, I don't think I am that special!

Yet God is that special, and David knows it. So he asks God to pay attention (to hear) to his complaint. The meaning of the word, *complaint*, is *prayer*. Yes, King David, the man after God's own heart (1 Sam.13:14) is praying a prayer of complaint, and that's okay. But he is not the only one who prayed a prayer of complaint.

Read Job 7:6-11.

In one word, describe how Job was feeling? To whom did he cry out?

Both David and Job complained to the Lord about their circumstances. I'm not so sure I should feel this way, but this makes me smile. If two of the most well-known men of the Old Testament complained to the Lord, then so can I. Let's be honest. Sometimes life gets really, really hard, and we just need to pour out our emotions out to God—the good, bad, and ugly. Girls, He can handle it. He is God. There is a time for praisin'—*and* a time for protestin'. (Can you hear the southern drawl?) Take your complaints, as well as everything else, to God.

Read 1 Peter 5:7.

What is Peter's advice to those who are dealing with troubles? Why?

Casting Our Cares Elsewhere

Thankfully, I have never been on the receiving end of vindictive and or intentional harm. However, I have had untruths said of me, and the old adage, "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," is simply not true. Words do hurt—as much or more than sticks and stones.

When this has happened to me, I wish I could say that I always took the high road and went straight to God to protest or complain. But I am guilty of going to the phone, instead of going to the Throne. Casting my cares on someone other than God just fans the flame of my already sizzling situation.

Read Proverbs 16:28.

What is a person who stirs conflict called?

A perverse or cantankerous person is disagreeable and rejects what is right and good. Continuing to be disagreeable, and discussing troublesome situations with everyone but God, fans the flames of the situation, causing it to grow bigger than it ever should have become. When we fan the flames by going to the phone rather than the throne, our conversations have a tendency to turn slanderous. Our words can be hurtful, tainting the image of the persons involved, to the person we are complaining to. Eventually, the “fire” will go out, but unfortunately, we are never able to take our hurtful words back.

Read Ephesians 4:29.

What kind of talk should come from our mouths?

Sharpening Our Swords

David likens the tongues of enemies to sharp swords, and their words like deadly arrows ready to ambush the innocent. How different our relationships would be if we sharpened our tongues and shot arrows only of encouragement, love, and confirmation! Since our words are shaped by what is our heart (Luke 6:45), it stands to reason that if we nurture good things in our heart, bad words wouldn't come out of it.

Read Psalm 119:11.

What is the best prevention for the wrong things taking residence in our heart?

By hiding God's Word in our heart, our prayers of complaint will be reshaped quickly into prayers of praise, much like David's. Time spent in His Word will yield the fruit of confident trust in our Heavenly Father that He will take every troublesome situation and work it out for our good and for His glory. His Word will fill us with wisdom to respond to such situations with grace. And His truth will teach us to react with Christ-like character.

I love that this Psalm doesn't tell us not to complain, but instead, it encourages us to keep the conversation confidential—between the Lord and me. Oh, how different life would be if we could just get this right!

Psalm 64



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Psalm 65

Author: David

Though the exact time of Psalm 65's writing is unknown, the theme is not. It is undoubtedly a song of praise written in response to a period of drought.

When we hear the word *drought*, we tend to think of a shortage of rain and the agricultural effects of the shortage. But a drought is not limited to agriculture. We can experience a spiritual drought; a shortage of spiritual refreshing that can strongly affect us physically, mentally, and emotionally. Our seasons of spiritual drought reveal our desperate need for God, and it is one way that God reveals himself to His children. We can know that He will care for us during our drought, transforming our spiritual shortage into abundance.

You Care For And Enrich (verse 9b)

God provides. He provides for our needs through others, through His creation, and through His Word. His miraculous ways are jaw-dropping and show-stopping. He delights in being Jehovah-Jireh, the God who provides. He leaves nothing unattended, from food for our physical nourishment to money for a new hot water heater.

My family was in a period of shortage when I was in college. My father, a carpenter, was badly injured while repairing a roof after a devastating hurricane trampled our city. He required multiple surgeries, and while the medical bills increased, my father's income decreased. Finishing college and planning my wedding seemed secondary to food and family. But God provided.

We never missed a meal. My parents never stopped tithing. And the money for hot water—in the form of a cashier's check—was found in the mailbox.

Read **Philippians 4:19**.

What needs will God supply? According to what?

He cares for and enriches us according to *His* riches in glory. There is not a need He will not meet according to His plans.

Read **Genesis 22:14**.

Who was the first person to call God, The LORD will PROVIDE, Yahweh-Yireh?

How has He provided for you?

You Drench (verse 10)

The word *Drench* means to saturate by immersion. During my family's "drought", every need was met. We were immersed in God's care. Ten couples in our church made a covenant to supplement my father's income and cover what worker's compensation did not. These earthly "angels" have remained anonymous even after twenty years. The outpouring of provision was overwhelming. Day after day, He supplied our every need, according to His riches in glory. To this day, those miracles take my breath away.

Reread Philippians 4:19.

By what standard does God meet our needs?

You Soften (verse 10)

The showers of blessings we received during those days of drought softened our hearts. We had always been a family that cared for and loved people. The reach of my parent's benevolence extended from providing for single mothers in crisis to preparing meals for the sick to doing carpentry for the needy. But during our drought, the soil of our hearts was softened even more.

Read Matthew 25:45.

Who are we caring for when we care for those in need?

You Crown (verse 11)

Our family was crowned with God's bounty, not for only one year, but for two. After all the pain and surgeries and long recovery, my dad was able to walk into my college graduation as well as walk me down the center aisle on my wedding day. God truly transformed our shortage to abundance.

Read 1 Timothy 6:17.

Why does God richly provide for His children?

God provides for our needs and for our enjoyment. He wants us to enjoy His abundance! Now that's a reason to shout!

Your People Shout For Joy And Sing (verse 13)

When our shortage becomes a surplus, we cannot help but respond with shouts of joy and singing. In every season, He is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us (Ephesians 3:20).

Psalm 65



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Psalm 66

Author: Anonymous

Commentaries have various opinions concerning the author and the occasion of Psalm 66. They do agree that the psalmist is reflecting on the deliverance of God's people from a period of captivity. The psalmist celebrates God's faithfulness in hearing and answering prayer. I believe it was written to celebrate and remember God's deliverance of His people from Egypt.

Delivered Into Captivity (verse 11)

The last thing we want to consider is that our gracious and loving God would permit His children to be brought into slavery. Nor do we want to consider that we might put ourselves into slavery. But God has given us free will, and He allows us to choose to what or to whom we are committed. Does God want us to deliver ourselves into chemical dependency, sexual impurity, or behavioral addictions? No! Does He have the power to stop us? Yes! Then why doesn't He?

Why do you suppose God does not stop His children from destruction *before* they reach the point of a self-imposed slavery?

God will not force His children to choose to good and right things. His desire is for His children to *want* to do good and right things. He will allow us to walk the path of destruction, and carry the heavy burdens that accompany wrong choices, in order for us to see our need for His deliverance. But we can rest assured that He does not ignore our cries for rescue.

Read Exodus 3:7-8.

What is God concerned about?

Freedom is God's plan for His children. He provided us freedom from all possible forms of slavery by sending His Son to die (Galatians 5:1). He also equipped us with the power to call on Him in our weak and broken place of bondage, and then to ask for His help to make the right choices (2 Timothy 1:7). God's perfect plan for His children is to be free to enjoy the inheritance of being His child.

Tested and Refined (verse 10)

While God intends for us to be free, and while He will help to bring about deliverance, He will not waste an opportunity to refine us and help us learn from our wrong choices. Slavery, of any type, involves much anguish and suffering. Yet, suffering is a great teacher.

To refine silver, the temperature must reach over 2100 degrees Fahrenheit. That's hot! As the precious metal melts, its impurities rise to the top, and the silversmith removes them. The

impurities and imperfections simply cannot be removed unless the metal goes through this hot, purifying process.

God refines us much like a silversmith refines the precious metal. Our anguish and suffering can be likened to the smelting process of silver. God knows that it is necessary for things to “get hot” in our lives in order for our impurities and imperfections to be removed. When things “cool down” our faith is then stronger, and we are pure and free of the impurities that led us to our need for deliverance.

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7.

What is the purpose of refining our faith?

What is the natural result of refining?

From Sea To Dry Land (verse 6)

God is always on time. At the-very last minute, when freedom seemed impossible, when the Israelites were caught between the raging sea and the enemy Egyptians, God parted the sea (Exodus 14:21-22).

In our lives, He knows when the refining process is complete and the impurities are gone. So He permits the anguish and the suffering to last just long enough for our desperation to lead us to Him. That way our deliverance, our release can be accredited to no one other than Him. I’ve found that the “just in time release” is so extraordinary that I cannot conceive taking or giving the glory to another. In those moments, I long to cry out, “Praise be to God who has not rejected my prayer or withheld His love from me (vs. 20)!”

Read Exodus 14:16-18.

What does God want others to see and know through our release?

Read Joel 2:27.

What does our generous God say we won’t have to endure?

Our generous God repays we lose during our time in slavery check out Joel 2:27. The victory is His and gives the spoils to us.

Psalm 66



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Psalm 67

Author: Anonymous

Psalm 67 has also been called “Israel’s Missionary Prayer”. The New Testament tone of it is unlike any Psalm we have studied thus far. The psalmist’s words are very evangelistic in nature and promote the expansion of God’s Kingdom. Let us compare this Missionary Prayer to The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20,

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

It is easy to see the common themes of teaching God’s ways and God’s salvation. The difference is in how the commission is carried out. In The Great Commission, Jesus commands His disciples to carry it out. In the Missionary Prayer, the people pray and God carries it out.

May God

The psalmist directs us to pray big picture other-centered prayers. He teaches to pray “us” prayers and not just “me” prayers. Personally, I have found this challenging, not because I am unconcerned for “us”, but because I simply fail to remember to pray for “us.”

A few years ago, a visiting pastor made me face my big-picture prayer life weaknesses as he taught from the gospel of Luke. Today’s lesson refreshed my memory of his teaching.

Read Luke 10:1-2.

What problem does Jesus present to the disciples?

What is Jesus’ solution to the problem?

The same problem exists in our modern day. There is a huge harvest of people, far and wide, who need to hear the Good News of Jesus’ saving grace as well as the freedom found in His ways. The harvest is all around us, and we can be part of Jesus’ solution, by praying for workers.

It is easy to read this passage, however, and feel guilty for not having an overwhelming urge to fulfill the role of the worker. But we can rest in the fact that God’s gives different gifts to His children (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-10). We may be gifted differently, but we can all pray—pray for the “us.”

The psalmist outlines our big picture prayer:

Be gracious to us-

Bless us-

Face shine upon us-

Your ways be known-

show your kindness and favor to

abundantly bless us all with divine favor

His Presence brightens us

may know and experience you

Take a few minutes to pray the big picture prayer.

May the People

Our response to God's answer to our big picture prayer should always be praise. We may not even see the answer to our prayer on this side of Heaven. It may be unseen, unknown here on this earth. But the answer to our big picture prayer may come when a young teenage girl in Zimbabwe receives Jesus as her Savior as she reads a Bible that has finally been translated in her native language, when a young man in Guatemala answers the call to ministry, or perhaps when a boy hears the Gospel through a missionary in the Sudan desert. All these and more may happen—because you prayed a big picture prayer and praised God for the answer. Whether we see the answer or not, we must keep on praying and praising.

Read John 5:17.

When is God working? When should offer praise?

May the Nations

What a day it would be if all the nations were glad in God and sang for joy! This thought is an awesome motivator for prayer, isn't it? My mind thinks of the countries ravaged by war—those millions who long for something, anything, to sing about, and who hope, for any reason, to be glad. My heart aches for those who are full of hate and for those whose stomachs are empty. Can you hear a faint song of joy and the hint of laughter with just the thought of our prayers causing nations to sing for joy?

Read Psalm 33:12.

What does the Psalmist call the nation whose God is the Lord?

The good news is that, since Jesus has not yet returned to Earth, we have still have time to pray. We can start by personalizing and praying Proverbs 16:2 and Psalm 67:1. I have written the following prayer, personalizing Proverbs 16:2 and Psalm 67:1. Feel free to pray this prayer, or better yet, ask God to help you write your own prayer. Imagine what Heaven will be like when we see every nation, tribe, and tongue praising the Lord together.

*God, I confess that I have not been praying with a Kingdom focus. I pray that, when You weigh my motives, You will find my ways pure. May You, my God, be gracious and bless me. Will You, please, shine Your face upon me? It is my desire for Your ways to be known, and Your salvation to come to all the nations. I will be faithful to return all glory to You, praising You for the abundant ways You show Your kindness to me.
In the name of Jesus, my Savior I pray.*

Psalm 67



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Psalm 68

Author: David/Ezra

David, or possibly Ezra, has written this song to remember the victory God has allowed His people to experience. If the song is accredited to David, it is easy to see the exodus from Egypt might be reflected in the words. If Ezra is the writer, the song might possibly refer to the first group of Israelites returning to Jerusalem after being released from captivity in Babylon (Ezra 2).

Defining Victory

When we hear the word “victory”, our mind naturally gravitates to military battles. Most of us have not been on the front line of military maneuvers, but we have experienced battle. We often must carry out spiritual maneuvers on the front line of life, battling the enemy of our soul.

Let’s examine some military terms in a spiritual light. Dictionary.com gives the following definitions:

Victory: success or triumph over an enemy in battle or war

Battle: any conflict or struggle; participation in hostile encounters or engagements

When we put the words “victory” and “battle” together, we can have a simple working definition for our spiritual application.

Spiritual Victory: a success or triumph over an enemy in any conflict, struggle, or hostile encounter.

Each one of us has experienced conflict, struggles, or hostile encounters. It is very likely that many of you reading this today are currently experiencing conflict, struggles, or hostile encounters. This is result of living a world tainted by sin. In the midst of strife, however, we have good news and a cause to celebrate.

Read John 16:33.

What is our good news?

Read 1 John 4:4.

What is our reason to celebrate?

In John 16:33, Jesus confirms that we will have troubles in this world. John forecasts victory for all who are secure in Christ. Knowing that we will be victorious makes facing conflict, struggles, and hostile encounters more bearable. Our position in the battle is to hold onto the “will be.”

Scripture supports our “will be” stand:

Read 1 Peter 1:5. What can we trust God to do for us? _____

Read Philippians 4:19. What will God supply? _____

Read Romans 8:18. What we will see in our suffering? _____

Dressing for Success

Knowing we are going to be triumphant and successful is not enough. We must dress for success. Dressing the part always makes a girl feel confident. The apostle Paul selects an outstanding wardrobe, including accessories.

Read Ephesians 6:14-17.

List our success outfit including accessories, and don't forget our hat.

A Winning Attitude

Along with claiming victory and dressing for success, a winning attitude is essential. Life is hard, and it is easy to have a defeated attitude when the battle heats up. Our mind begins to doubt God's ability to care for us, and sometimes, we question His sovereignty. But we can transform an attitude of defeat by knowing “winning attitude” truths found in Scripture.

Read Isaiah 54:17: What will prosper against me? _____

Read Philippians 4:6: What should I be anxious about? _____

Read Philippians 4:13: What can I do through Christ? _____

Read Hebrews 13:5: Who will never leave or forsake me? _____

Read 1 John 4:4: Who is greater than our enemy? _____

These truths are worthy of memorizing, or at the very least, putting on an index card. For years, I recorded power verses in a spiral index card notebook. This book was my mini-Bible. It fit perfectly in my purse, and I could easily wield my sword when the battle heated up.

Our lesson today has fully equipped us for victory. We now must be determined not to live defeated—ever.

Psalm 68



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Psalm 69

Author: David

David is a man after God's own heart (1 Sam.13:14) and someone to whom we can relate. He has suffered a life of being ridiculed, laughed at, offended, and embarrassed, not mention the numerous attempts on his life. Most individuals would collapse in such circumstances. Though David has had some Eeyore moments, he continues to stand strong. In so doing, he leaves a legacy of faith so all those who come behind him can remain faithful, too.

Up To My Neck

Have you ever been up to your neck in "it"? You are probably nodding your head in agreement and saying under your breath, "Have I ever!" "It" can be anything from financial woes to wondering how to respond to a rebellious child. Maybe you have been up to your neck with marital infidelity, or sexual harassment on the job, or eating disorders, or unemployment. Sometimes we can sink deep in the miry depths, unable to get a foothold (verse 2). No matter what we do, our good intentions fail to get out of "it". What would happen to our "it" if we resolved to turn to God, seek Him, and fill our minds with something positive, encouraging, and life-giving?

Read Proverbs 3:3.

What does Solomon suggest we bind around our neck?

In the original Hebrew, *love* and *faithfulness* are translated as *truth* and *mercy*. Bound with truth and mercy, we will have the proper perspective and the right reaction to anything that attempts to come up around our neck. Our faith will become strong, giving us a secure place to get a foothold if we start to slip. The deep waters of our "it" will subside.

Read Proverbs 3:4.

How does binding our neck with truth and mercy benefit us?

Worn Out

If I had a nickel for each time I said "I'm worn out," my future would be financially secure. Life is hard and requires great effort. Even with all our greatest efforts, things do not always turn out the way we planned. I'm sure David never imagined such a difficult life when Samuel anointed him king (1 Samuel 16:13). Whether we are anointed king of a country, or whether we are pushing a broom at a local big box store, life can wear us out. Over the years, Matthew 11:28-30 has brought me incredible comfort. I recently discovered it in *The Message*. This Scripture reached even deeper into my state of worn-out-ness to bring me peace. I pray it will do the same for you.

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me, and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."
Jesus is speaking to a multitude of people, and He offers help to anyone who is weak, weary, and worn out. He gives us a four-step action plan. We can take the first step by coming to

Him and saying, “Lord, I am tired and worn out. I don’t know if I can make it through another day.” Look at Jesus’ tender response to our first step, “**Come with me. Get away with me. Walk with me. Work with me.**” What a comfort it is to know we are not alone. Figuring out how *not* to be worn out is *not* up to us. He does it. What a relief!

When we spend time with Him, we will learn His ways. And His ways will teach us how to do life without getting worn out. In the four-step action plan, (Come with Me. Get away with Me. Walk with Me. Work with Me.) we can recover our life. We will live life free, experiencing and extending His unforced rhythms of grace.

What is your favorite part of Matthew 11:28-30?

My Eyes Fail

Our eyes fail from the strain of looking for ways to lighten our load on our own. Tears flood our tired eyes when we have exhausted all our efforts and find we have failed. Then, we cry out, looking for God, but we fail to see Him because our efforts have taken us so far away from His best for us. While our eyes may fail to see Him, His eyes see us, and His ears hear each desperate cry.

I remember feeling like David, outnumbered and without hope. I also remember the eyes of my heart discovering the hope of Ephesians 1:18-20.

Read Ephesians 1:18-20.

What belongs to those who believe?

I began to pray this prayer:

Dear God,

I pray that the eyes of my heart will be enlightened ~~in order~~ that I may know the hope to which You have called me and the riches of Your glorious inheritance in Your holy people, and Your incomparably great power that is mine because I believe. I know this is the same power You exerted when You raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at Your right hand in the heavenly realms. Amen.

Over time, my faith became sight, my belief fell into agreement with my prayer, and His Words nourished my weak and worn-out state, giving me new life.

In this Psalm, David was up to his neck in trouble, worn out, and unable to see God, but he found the strength to pray. It is this resolve—the choice to look beyond circumstances and go to God—which keeps all those who face such circumstances from collapsing. Thank you, David, for leaving such a legacy of faith and resolve.

Psalm 69



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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.

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