

PSALMS 120-134

PSALMS OF ASCENT



daily devos
RADIATE STUDENTS

WELCOME!

Dear Students,

Thank you for joining us for our seventh series of Daily Devos! Our team is so excited that you've jumped in with us to go deeper with God and study his Word. We're proud to offer series on James, 1 Corinthians, Proverbs, Colossians, John, and now the Psalms of Ascent. If you missed any of those and are interested in studying those books of the Bible, you can visit our website and download those today.

The purpose of the Daily Devos is to get into the habit of spending time with God daily. We pray that you would also learn to continuously talk with God throughout your day and enjoy getting to know him deeper.

When you download (or print) your Daily Devos, here's what to expect:

- 1. Start by Praying:** "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:9). Ask God to speak to you through his Word. Talk to him. After all, it's a relationship!
- 2. Read:** This is the scripture passage your Devo will focus on for the day.
- 3. Reflect:** This is an explanation of the biblical passage for the day. It may include some teaching and illustrations, but it is meant to go deeper and get you thinking!
- 4. Respond:** This section has questions that you will want to answer. Don't just think about them, but really take the time to answer.
- 5. Real Life:** This involves taking your Daily Devos outside of your personal alone time and into your daily interactions with other people, through a missional moment or action step to really live out what we talked about.

This series is a little different. Instead of a book of the Bible, we are studying a grouping of Psalms, chapters 120-134, which are known as the Psalms of Ascent. More on this on Day 1.

This content will really be about what you take the time to put into it. Enjoy taking your time digesting the Bible. We are praying for you, and we love you. Let us know what you think!

Love,
The RADIATE Staff

WEEK 1 | DAY 1

READ: Deuteronomy 16:16

REFLECT:

Look a few pages above, and write out what the title of this series is: _____

Background of Psalms:

- The Psalms are divinely inspired poems and songs intended for worship.
- They were not intended as historical narrative, but they did parallel several of Israel's main events.
- The Psalms were written by a few different authors: David wrote 73, Asaph wrote 12, the sons of Korah wrote 9, Solomon wrote 2, then Moses, Heman, and Ethan each wrote one; 51 psalms are anonymous.
- Some of them mirror the writings of ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian hymns, but the content honors the one true God of Israel. This means it's possible some of them were written to the tune of popular music of the day.

There are 150 different Psalms in this book of worship songs, but we are going to focus these next two weeks on one particular grouping. The Psalms of Ascent are chapters 120-134, and they were sung by the Israelites who "ascended" the hill where the Temple was in Jerusalem.

The Israelites would have traveled from their hometowns, villages, or different parts of the city, and they came to the Temple for three different festivals throughout the year. The 15 Psalms represent the 15 steps up the hill. Some scholars also believe they were sung by the Levites (aka priests) as they ascended the 15 steps to conduct their priestly duties at the Temple.

We're going to take the same journey that the ancient people of God took to worship him in his Temple. It is such a cool feeling to realize that these Psalms have not only been read for centuries, but they were actually sung over and over again. These were well-worn, popular, nostalgic, and generational songs worshipping the same God we worship.

What a legacy! As you read through these Psalms over the next two weeks, revel in the history that they represent. If you're musical, try singing them or playing a tune that could match them. Maybe you have a stair that you can sit on to read these devos to represent the ascent. Enjoy interacting with the Bible creatively!

Pray:

Dear God, thank you for this unique opportunity to study some of the Psalms. I pray that you would grow my love for you and deepen my desire to follow you as a result of this study. I pray that you would open my eyes to your truth, and let me serve you humbly today.

RESPOND:

How does it make you feel to know that you're about to study songs that people sang to God thousands of years ago? What is your favorite worship song right now?

REAL LIFE:

Think about where you are with God: do you have questions, would you like to grow in your faith, have you been distant from God recently, are you all-in and in love with the Lord, are you too ashamed or scared to talk to God? No matter where you are in your journey with God, what matters is that you're honest before him. And pray that he would help you move along your journey toward him and that you'd grow closer to him as a result of this series.

WEEK 1 | DAY 2

READ: Psalm 120

REFLECT:

Describe a time when you have felt homesick:

Explain, please!

Meshech and Kedar were nations that surrounded Israel. The song writer is basically saying that he was in a strange new place and far from home, surrounded by people that believed different things. Have you ever traveled to another place and felt like you were way out of your comfort zone? So did the pilgrims on this journey.

The traveler has already left home. He is in a distant land, living alongside people who are not following God. This new culture is hostile, hateful, and deceitful, according to the song. The language says it all: “I am tired”, “woe to me”, “too long”, “it pains me”, and “how I suffer”. “Are we there yet” doesn’t compare to the physical and spiritual exhaustion being faced here.

The struggle is real. But as far as he was from home, these words were written with the goal in mind: worship. The house of God is waiting for me at the other side of those mountains. I’m going to worship him all the way there and worship him when he gets me to my destination.

It’s hard to be around people that don’t follow God when you are truly trying to live for him. It could be that people around you pick on you for your high standards. Maybe they just don’t understand your Christ-like take on things, and you find yourself frustrated and feeling like no one understands. It’s possible you’re in a situation where you’re wondering if it’s just easier to blend in.

Don’t! Keep the goal in mind. When you can’t see on the other side of your mountains, remember the beautiful gift that is on the other side: the presence of God! Sometimes it’s hard to worship. Sometimes even if you want to, you don’t know how. Keep worshipping him.

Pray:

Thank you, Father, for the first stop on our journey in the Psalms of Ascent. I pray that you would show me how I can sing the songs of the ancient people of Israel, and I pray that I would worship you no matter what. I pray that even when things get hard, distracting, or tiring, please give me the strength to keep you in mind. I want to worship you all along the way.

RESPOND:

This Psalm points out the stark difference between Peace and Truth vs. War and Deceit. Which do you appreciate in other people? Are you someone who brings peace and speaks truth, or someone who creates war and speaks deceit? What about the people you hang around?

REAL LIFE:

Read Romans 12:18. Think about someone in your life that you may not be at peace with. Do everything you can to be at peace with them, because at the end of the day you're reflecting the God of Peace to them.

WEEK 1 | DAY 3

READ: Psalm 121

REFLECT:

What are some phrases from this Psalm that suggest actual, physical journeying?

A little deeper... Look at verse 6. Obviously it's easy to imagine being struck by the sun, but why does it say the moon won't strike you? "The notion that the moon beamed harmful influences was widespread in the ancient Near East," says the Anchor Bible. In fact, the word "lunatic" can be compared with "lunar", another word for moon. People were superstitious about being "moonstruck" and going crazy. So playing off that concept, the psalmist reminds us that God will protect your mind from harm as well.

The traveler is still on the journey, but the lonely terrain brings the destination even closer. It would be easy to focus on the difficulty of the excursion. Cliffs. Rocks. Heat. Exposed. Drained. But the psalmist keeps his eyes on the source of his help for the journey, which is the Lord. This Psalm is a great example of how worshipful this experience was. And the object of his worship is what is keeping him going on the quest.

You can confidently expect that God watches over you. Not in a creepy way, or in Santa's "he sees you when you're sleeping" kind of way. But in the most loving and genuine protector kind of way. And he'll never sleep on the job or get tired of his children coming to him for help.

This journey was risky. The paths were steep. Loose rocks could cause you to slip in some places. But it was worth it. "Safe" does not equal never experiencing difficulty. Safe in God's hands means sometimes hard or bad things do happen, but he is watching over you and taking care of you in the middle of it all. And an obsession with safety will sometimes deter you from taking godly risks for your faith. This terrain was risky, but at the end of the day, the traveler knew God keeps my soul in his hand.

What's been the scariest part of your journey so far? Where do you need God's help right now? Are you willing to trust the Maker of Heaven and Earth with what you're going through today?

Pray:

This story shows me that you are safe to bring my questions to, and that I can trust you. I pray that the next time I'm made to feel embarrassed about asking, you would give me confidence to ask you or another trusted, godly person.

RESPOND:

What questions do you have about God?
If someone gave you a direct link, like a two-way satellite to God, would you take it? Why or why not?

REAL LIFE:

Look at the second respond question: They have! You can tell others that you can communicate with God whenever and wherever you want and for however long and about anything. This is true, so try going the whole day talking to God. Just about anything and everything. Enjoy him! And tell someone about it.

WEEK 1 | DAY 4

READ: John 2:13-25

REFLECT:

What is your dream vacation? What is the best part about being out of town?

What's so special about Jerusalem?

Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, the nation of God's chosen people. Mount Zion was the hill that the city was built on, so sometimes it's also called Zion. "Salem," "shalem," or "shalom" means peace. So it is the city of peace, or the place where we will see peace. God's presence and home was there for a long time. (Now he dwells in his people through the Holy Spirit.) The God of the city of peace would be the God of peace. Today, we're talking all about how peace is a huge part of who God is.

Joy! Gladness! Finally! The pilgrim has arrived at the city where he gets to worship his God! Is going to church, gathering with Christians, and prioritizing time with the Lord a joy or a drudgery for you? Let's pray that we are eager to worship God and not doing anything out of obligation. Obviously COVID-19 has caused a lot of those luxuries to be taken away. But at the heart of it, do you value time in God's presence, even if it's just you alone in your room?

We established above that Jerusalem literally means "City of Peace". A lot of times when we think of peace, we assume it means calmness or the absence of conflict. But the peace that God describes is a sense of completeness, well-being, justice, and prosperity...as well as, yes, the absence of conflict.

Read Ephesians 2:11-22, and you'll notice several parallels to this passage with our Psalm today, where the traveler is a foreigner on a hostile journey looking for "fellow citizens" of God's chosen people. But here's the best part of the passage: Jesus himself is described as our peace. "He himself is our peace." Yes, one very big takeaway from today's Daily Devo is that we should pray for peace in Israel. We should also pray for others, like the writer does. Ultimately, we can and should trust that Jesus is our peace. We can find it nowhere else!

Pray:

God, you are the God of peace. Thank you for all that that means. I pray that the areas in my life where I'm missing peace, that I would look to you to fill those gaps in my life. I pray that you would help me be a person of peace and show that peace to other people, especially those that don't know you.

RESPOND:

Name some people that you get excited to see at church. Now name some relationships you may have at church that you wouldn't have if you didn't go to church. What are some things you love about those friends from church?

REAL LIFE:

God has entrusted you to the city that you live in. Think about that for a second. Where you live, in this exact moment in history, with the exact family he has you in, in that neighborhood, with those friends, at this church...God knew it all. You may spend your time wishing you were somewhere, or sometime, else. Stop for just a second and pray about how God wants to use you in the places of influence he has you right now. Commit to thanking him through your circumstances and not wishing them away.

WEEK 1 | DAY 5

READ: Psalm 123-124

REFLECT:

Psalm 124:1 in different versions:

“What if the Lord had not been on our side?” (NLT)

“If it had not been the Lord who was on our side...” (ESV)

“If the Lord had not been on our side...” (NIV)

“If God hadn’t been for us...” (Message)

Read Psalm 124:8 from today’s reading, and go back to Psalm 121:2 from two days ago. What is the repeated phrase in those verses?

Look at some verses that are similar to today’s reading:

Deuteronomy 33:29 “Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you, and you shall tread upon their backs.”

Psalm 46:1 “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

Psalm 118:6-9 “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The Lord is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.”

Romans 8:31 “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Hebrews 4:16 “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Hebrews 13:6 “So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’”

We need God’s help! If God wasn’t on our side...it would be bad. But he is 100% entirely on our side. And he’s there to help us at all times.

Pray:

Thank you, God, for being on my side! You're present and involved in my life, and I'm sorry for the times I've ignored that. Thank you for all that means and for all the ways you've helped me.

RESPOND:

Where would you be if God had not been on YOUR side?

REAL LIFE:

He's not on your side only. Could it be that God wants to help someone else and use you to do it? Help someone today, and tell them that you did it because God loves them and is on their side.

WEEK 1 | DAY 6

READ: Psalm 125

REFLECT:

What is the most secure, sturdy, and safe place you can think of? What are some qualities that make this place feel safe to you?

Today is all about security. How God is our defense and safe place. Mountains surrounded Jerusalem, which made for a hard journey into the city. But it was also beneficial from a practical standpoint. You don't want your enemies to be able to walk right into town easily. According to this passage, the Lord surrounds his people "both now and forever". So just like the physical mountains surrounded his holy city, the Holy Spirit surrounds and delivers his people.

Eternal Security: The concept that is taught in the Bible that when a person has genuine faith in Jesus and has surrendered to him and accepted him as Savior, that person is forever kept secure by God. Aka "once saved, always saved". See Isaiah 33:6, John 10:28-29, John 14:17, John 17:24, Romans 8:38-39, Romans 11:29, Ephesians 2:8, Ephesians 4:30 for more.

The eternal security of a believer means when you enter into a genuine relationship with Jesus, you don't have to worry about losing your salvation. It obviously doesn't suggest that believers will never struggle or deal with sin or go through a rough time.

But if someone who said they were a Christian walks away from God, the question is whether they had a true relationship with him to begin with; you also don't know the conviction they are struggling with. Eternal security is based on God, not me. To have salvation taken away requires something more powerful than God. Our salvation is secure, because God is the only one powerful enough to keep us. Unshakable mountains need something unshakable that keeps them sturdy.

This is not really a concept that we talk about a lot. But it's important for you to know, because it means that when you give you life to Jesus, you can have confidence that he will keep you in his hand. We can put our full confidence in God, not only for the day-to-day, but also for all of eternity. He is the most trustworthy One of all.

Pray:

You are my sure foundation, the steady ground beneath my feet. This series has a lot of metaphor in it and a lot of parallels to journeying. But thank you for showing me how I can count on you in my journey. You are the most sure, steady, and safe place to put my trust. I trust you, God.

RESPOND:

Are you SURE of your salvation? How do you know?

REAL LIFE:

Read Psalm 118:6. People who are swayed super easily by opinions, trends, people, etc., tend to be people that don't have a lot of confidence in who they are. Their security is shaky; not always, but oftentimes that's the case. Be someone who is confident in who God made you, and trust him that he will keep your soul safe, therefore you have nothing to fear.

WEEK 1 | DAY 7

READ: Psalm 126

REFLECT:

Can you describe the happiest you've ever been in your life? What was the occasion? Give as much detail as you can.

Today's Theme:

We look back on his faithfulness, so we can trust him for the future.

Verses 1-3 are reminiscent of a time when God did an amazing work in the nation of Israel, and they were filled with laughter and shouting and absolute joy. Verses 4-6 start with "and now". There's a clear break: looking back, looking forward. Patience is necessary as we endure hard times. When we are sad, God will help you sing a song again.

When God did this good thing for the Israelites, it was amazing! And he's still so good to us. He's been good to you and given you example after example of his faithfulness and power. You may not be able to see it all, and you may not think what you're going through right now is good. But his goodness in your life is there.

Hebrews 10:23 says, "He who promised is reliable and trustworthy and faithful." That's such a cool promise! When we look back on how he's been faithful, we trust him to be faithful in the future too.

Look at your life and think of one way God was faithful. For example, maybe he provided for your family during a tough time financially. Well, take that as evidence that he is trustworthy for the future. So the next time you face a financial struggle, you can trust that he will provide, because he's done it before. (Disclaimer: This doesn't mean everything will always work out perfectly. But it does mean that we can trust him to take care of us. What we're talking about today is an exercise of trust that brings peace. God, you were faithful before, and I trust you to be faithful again, even if it's not what I expect.)

Pray:

God, thank you for how you've been so faithful. You've been there for me time and time again, even when I didn't realize it or didn't appreciate you for it. I pray that you will help me to remember your faithfulness, so that I can trust you for future things that I go through. And I will be patient when things aren't amazing all the time. Then I pray that you will let me rejoice when the crying is over, like the Psalm says.

RESPOND:

What is something God has done for you that's absolutely amazing?
What is something that has happened in your life that's been absolutely awful?

REAL LIFE:

Think of a real-life example of looking back and looking forward. Look back at when God was faithful so you can trust him for the future. Look back at _____ and trust him for _____. (You can use the space provided above for room to write it out if you want.)

WEEK 2 | DAY 1

READ: Psalm 127

REFLECT:

This quote is attributed to Saint Ignatius: “Pray as if everything depended on God, and work as if everything depended on you.” What are your thoughts on that quote? What do you think it means? Do you agree or disagree?

About the author...

Our old pal Solomon wrote this Psalm! He was the wisest man that ever lived. Don't read this Psalm and think that God does not care about hard work. On the contrary, we talked in our Proverbs series about how God honors hard work. So put the theme of this Psalm with the theme from that Proverb together: hard work is important, and let the Lord build. How do we do that?.

Solomon was a builder. He built the original Temple that they went to for worship. But the Temple was destroyed. The people were taken away to exile. When they returned to their home, Zerubbabel led the people to rebuild the Temple, Ezra led a group home to rebuild the spiritual life of the people, and Nehemiah led a group to rebuild Jerusalem's fortress walls. But all of that building and rebuilding was in vain if the Lord had not been part of it. That's where this Psalm is going.

God calls us to be builders. He said to be fruitful/build families, to build homes and places of worship, and to build the kingdom of God. Remember John 15:5 from our last series? If you're not connected to God, the work you do isn't going to be powerful. What are you building in your life?

The balance is this: we are not in control. We must rely on God to build our lives. Before COVID-19, we certainly felt in control. Then when things shut down we quickly realized we are not in control. Has re-entering some more normal aspects of your life caused you to forget that you're not in control? Don't forget! We must trust him for every part of our lives. Build. Trust. Let God.

Pray:

Thank you for being the Master Builder, the ultimate source of power and strength, the one that allows us to work hard, and the God who is on our side, who knows and wants what's best for us. I pray that you would point out the areas in my life where I feel the need to be in control. Show me how I can surrender those to you.

RESPOND:

Do you struggle in the area of giving God control? If not, talk about how you got there. If so, talk about the areas where you want control yet it's been hard to give that to God.

REAL LIFE:

The need to feel in control is very real, and it's important that you learn sooner rather than later in your life that God is ultimately in control. If you desire to make straight A's, be in the best shape of your life, stay safe and healthy, have good friends, etc...but you leave God out of it, all your striving is in vain. Spend some time praying about Philippians 4:6 and Proverbs 3:5-6.

WEEK 2 | DAY 2

READ: Psalm 128-129

REFLECT:

What comes to mind when you think of the word “blessing”?

More on blessings...

“Blessings” can have the potential to be misconstrued in Christian culture. Some people treat the word like it means Jesus is Santa Clause or a genie, who grants us any wish we want if we’re a good little boy or girl. That wrongfully treats Christianity like karma, where good things will come to you if you do what’s right. But any blessing that comes to anyone is because it’s part of God’s character, not because we deserve it. In fact, we don’t deserve anything good at all because of our sin.

Happiness. Inner peace. Call it what you want. But blessings are a good thing, and being happy is not a bad thing. It’s a GOOD thing to be happy, because that emotion is a gift from God. But it can never be our goal. Some of us have been taught to have joy no matter our circumstance, so sometimes we as Christians walk around wondering if it’s okay to be happy and have good feelings toward our situations. Should we be down or serious all the time? No. Should happiness be the goal? Also, no.

If you don’t have something bad happening, don’t try to make it up or top someone who has it hard if you don’t. Some of you reading this have it extremely hard, and it’s okay to admit that. Some of you are in a good spot, so celebrate that! And if you’re in a hard place, don’t think God will make it better if you’re on your best behavior. Matthew 5:4 says that even when you mourn you can still be blessed. Let’s look at some other examples of what “blessed” means in Scripture:

Luke 11:28 says that you’re blessed when you hear and know God’s Word. John 13:14-17 says that you’re blessed when you know and do what Jesus says. Romans 10:12-13 says that you’re blessed when you call on him as Lord. Matthew 5 talks about those who are blessed, including someone even when they are mourning, because God will comfort you.

Pray:

God, you have blessed me more than I could ever know. You've given me life, you've given me breath, you've protected me from so many things, and you've allowed me to live in a great part of the world and be part of this student ministry and church. Open my eyes to see your blessings. I want to give you 100% credit for them, because I've done nothing to deserve them.

RESPOND:

Think about the fact that this was a corporate worship song... How does this impact how you read this? How can you praise God today? What has he blessed you with? Even in tough times, what are some blessings he's given you?

REAL LIFE:

Another truth taught in these two Psalms is that God is the true head of the home. Pray for continual blessing for your family. If your family includes people that aren't followers of Jesus, pray for their salvation. Pray for your future home one day that it will be built on the foundation of God. Think about how that affects the type of person you want to date and how you pray for your future.

WEEK 2 | DAY 3

READ: John 11:57-12:11

REFLECT:

Do you know what God's will is for your life?

Jeremiah 29:11

If you were to write the OPPOSITE of Jeremiah 29:11, it would be, "I can't decide what I have planned for you," says the Lord, "but my plans will not be for good, but for disaster. They will end your life and you will be hopeless."

Here's the miracle of the hope of God: what was written above is simply not true! God is our hope, our future, he is good to us, and he has plans for us.

Have you ever wondered what God's will is for your life? We can put all our hope and trust in him. From the depths of full despair, hopelessness, destruction, and pain, the traveler on his journey cries out to God in collective song.

Verses 3-5 from today's reading say, "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope." There is forgiveness for sins and hope to be found in God. One answer to the question up top is that you surrender to him and trust him for salvation, then grow in your love, faith, and knowledge of Jesus! Have you given your life to him?

Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

Romans 3:10 "as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one'"

Romans 5:12 "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned"

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 5:8 "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 10:9-10 "because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

Romans 10:13 "For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'"

RESPOND:

Have you given your life to Christ?

If your answer is “no”: What is keeping you from doing that today?

Pray: God I need you. Thank you for sending your son Jesus to die for me. Forgive me of my sin, come into my life, and be my Savior and King. And may I never be ashamed!

If “yes”: Who have you told about it recently?

Pray: Thank you, God, for salvation!

REAL LIFE:

If you said “no” above: Reach out to Chip, Eli, Katie, a LifeGroup leader, or parent, and tell them that you need Jesus. If you said “yes”: Take the Romans Road, and start memorizing it. Keep it near you at all times, and whip it out to share it with someone else this week.

WEEK 2 | DAY 4

READ: Psalm 131

REFLECT:

What are some examples of pride? What are some results of being prideful

On today's theme...

My heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I do not get involved with things too great or difficult for me. Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself..."
Can I honestly say that? A good exercise to get into when reading Scripture is to ask, can I say this honestly? Is this true of me?

This Psalm has a very emotional and sentimental metaphor in it. A child snuggled up next to its mother, calm and quiet, peaceful, drifting off to sleep in the most comfortable, warm, and safe position. The Father God invites us to do this with him. In fact, I should do this instead of being proud and meddling. So the contrast is peace with arrogance. We just talked about peace, a few days ago. One sure way to keep peace from my heart is when I am proud and meddling.

So if you want peace, first and foremost, start by looking for it from God. Next, actively refuse to look for it in you. Don't be proud. Scripture has so much to say on pride, so let's look and see what it can tell us.

Proverbs 11:2 "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom."

Proverbs 16:5 "Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished."

Romans 12:16 "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight."

Galatians 6:3 "For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

Philippians 2:3 "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

Pray:

God, I hear your message loud and clear. I'm sorry for how I've sinned against you in pride.

RESPOND:

What pride do you need to confess to God right now? Where do you feel like you're better than other people, you're focused on yourself, you have rivalry, you're arrogant, or you refuse to "associate with the lowly"?

REAL LIFE:

"My heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I do not get involved with things too great or difficult for me. Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself..." Pray about getting to the point where you could say those things truthfully. Ask a friend to keep you accountable for an area of pride in your life.

WEEK 2 | DAY 5

READ: Psalm 132

REFLECT:

What has been one of the biggest takeaways so far from reading this Daily Devo series? What has God been teaching you?

You'll notice...

Today is similar to Week 1 Day 7. In fact, you are probably noticing at this point that a lot of these days overlap in some way. This is not an exact science, breaking up passages of Scripture into 14 clean and separate Daily Devos. The Bible has many themes and repeats many of its principles throughout the whole text. So don't be surprised if a devotional in a passage overlaps somewhat with a devotional in another part of that passage. God's Word is so rich and awesome.

Looking back on the hardships that King David endured, the traveler is asking for the same favor that David had when he was going through his own trying times. Let's remember some of his hardships: David was overlooked by his own Father as worthy to be king, his best friend's dad tried to kill him, his own sin of adultery and murder brought about extremely difficult consequences including the loss of a baby, his son Amnon raped his sister, then another son Absalom murdered Amnon, then Absalom tried to murder David too... his life had some rough spots. But the whole time the Lord's favor was upon him and he was given grace upon grace.

Telling stories about your past is a huge element in sharing your faith and growing in it too. Already in this Daily Devo series you've been challenged to recall ways that God has been faithful to you and the things you're thankful for that God gave you. Looking at some hardships in your life and then showing people how God was faithful can be such a good practice. And telling people about how your life has been changed by Jesus is a crucial part of presenting the Gospel with someone.

God promised to be faithful and bless David, and he came through on that promise. You can trust him to do the same! Here are some verses that include promises of God: Deuteronomy 31:8, Psalm 32:8, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 11:28-29, John 16:33, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

Pray:

Thank you, God, for fulfilling your promises. You are so trustworthy, and I can count on you to be faithful in my life. Remember your favor on your servant David, and grant that same favor to me as well.

RESPOND:

Get into the habit of reading Scripture and asking questions. The first question should NOT be “how does this apply to my life”, but a better first question is “what does this tell me about God”...and then you can look inwardly. This latter question focuses your heart on God, gets you out of the habit of reading the Bible selfishly, and cuts down on possibly misinterpreting certain passages. Look up some of the promise verses from above and answer that question for each one: what does this tell me about God?

REAL LIFE:

Think about your personal testimony. What was your life like before Jesus? How did you meet Jesus? What has your life been like since you met Jesus? Write your Jesus story down, practice it, and then share it!

WEEK 2 | DAY 6

READ: Psalm 133

REFLECT:

Write out Psalm 133:1 in the space, and commit to memorizing it today:

“The first story in the Bible about brothers living together is the story of Cain and Abel. And it is a murder story. Significantly, their fight was a religious fight, a quarrel over which of them loved God best.” ~ Eugene Peterson

Disunity is not new. Harmony in the church (not just at BHBC, but more broadly we’re talking about harmony among Christians) is beautiful, good, and pleasant. It also pleases the Lord. It is sacred. It sets a good example for the outside world of how the family of God should and does look. It propels ministry to be done. It is a pleasant thing. It is how God called us to be.

So why don’t we always get along?

In a word: sin. In many words: it’s because of what we talked about two days ago; we all want to be number one. James 4:1 says, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?”

We can have a pleasant/pleasurable experience when we seek pleasure for ourselves. We can also seek out a pleasant moment as part of a community when we belong together and serve each other’s interests.

This second kind of pleasure requires us to lay down selfishness and pick up vulnerability. It requires us to trust God that he will look out for us, so we don’t have to look out for our own pleasures and self-interest. Unity with others takes work. It takes humility. It takes risk. But as we see from our main verse today, it results in good, pleasant, and beautiful moments that should be celebrated among Christians.

Pray:

Jesus, thank you for how you were the ultimate example of selflessness, humility, vulnerability, and reconciliation when you hung on the cross for my sins. You are ultimately wanting us to live in unity with one another so that we can reflect the unity that man and God can have once more because of your sacrifice for sins. Show me how I can reflect this truth in my life today with the people around me. I want to glorify you by living in unity and harmony with others, especially with other Christians.

RESPOND:

Is there someone in your life that you need to reconcile with? Reconciliation is not just forgiving someone. It's pursuing restoration and friendship. How have you seen that it's UN-pleasant when you're not in unity with that person?

REAL LIFE:

Read Matthew 5:23-24. Go make it right with that person!

WEEK 2 | DAY 7

READ: Psalm 134

REFLECT:

We do hi/lo's in LifeGroup sometimes, sharing about the best part of your week so far and the worst part of your week so far. What are your hi/lo's from this past week?

We have arrived! Praise the Lord! The journey is over! There were highs and lows - but NOW let's praise the Lord.

What are you happy about? Praise the Lord. What are you frustrated by? Praise the Lord. What are you worried about? Praise the Lord. What are you currently celebrating? Praise the Lord. No matter how the journey has been so far, let's take a moment and say that God deserves our praise and respect no matter what. Praise the Lord when you don't feel like it, and praise the Lord when you do.

God's character in each of the psalms that we have studied so far in our ascent on the journey to the Temple with the other Israelites. You'll notice that each step on the climb reflects some part of his character.



PRAY/RESPOND:

Circle the character traits of God on the stairs that mean the most to you right now in your life, and praise him for it. Write a prayer in the space below praising him for who he is, no matter what you feel like or what your circumstances are. Praise him!

REAL LIFE:

We challenge you to bring up a characteristic of God from the Psalms of Ascent in a conversation today with a friend or family member. And share the Daily Devos with someone else! If this series has been meaningful to you, you can share it with your friends. Congratulations - you made it! Now praise the Lord!