

Connect

How We Connect As Followers of Jesus



Daily Life
Five Oaks Church
Week 1: August 29–September 24, 2015

Day 1

August 31



Pray / Ask God to help remind you that he alone is God.

PSALMS CAN EASILY be seen by some as something cliché. Example: If you are discontented, then perhaps you need to ponder Psalm 23: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Although this is not an incorrect usage, psalms are so much more than that. In light of 2 Timothy 3: 16–17, the psalms are in the Bible because God knows they are important for us.

John Goldingay, in *Psalms for Everyone, Part 1*, suggests that psalms present us with examples of how to speak to God (pray) in four general ways: acknowledging God’s greatness, requesting his help, acknowledging our trust in him, and thanking him.

These prayers are applicable on both the corporate and personal levels. Many of the psalms are attributed to Israel’s King David and can be tied to specific times and experiences in his life. Yet we as individuals, a church, and even a nation can relate to those circumstances and needs and pray the same prayers. The important thing is that despite our circumstances, God is God, period!



Read / Psalm 1



Reflect / Choose one of the following questions for reflection.

Right this moment you are living your life in one of two ways: You are either living your own way, and that will end badly, or you are living God's way, which is the only way that ends well for you. So which way are you choosing to live your life right now?

Think about an "easy" decision you've made that has, in the application, actually been very difficult. Has it been worth the price you have paid thus far, will it be worth the price in the end?

There is always a "shortcut" available. As a matter of fact, it is the way the Devil always offers. He even tried to offer Jesus an easier way than God's way. Find it in Matthew 4: 1–11. Choosing God's way requires effort and a constant reorienting of your way to his way. Are you willing to go God's way and everything that entails?

Day 2

September 1



Pray / Ask God to help you examine your heart and ways.

EVERYONE LONGS TO laugh with the crowd and not be among the ones being laughed at. In today's passage, the psalmist indicates that God laughs. Imagine that God is watching *America's Funniest Home Videos* and laughing. Why? Because as soon as the clip starts, he already knows (like you usually do) that it will end very badly. How our plotting and scheming must appear to the one who knows our innermost thoughts, not to mention knows who actually is in charge and how it's going to end.

Psalm 1 (yesterday's reading) is directed toward the individual, while Psalm 2 is intended for the nations (of individuals, of course). They end the same way. God is in control, and his blessings come only when we acknowledge this. God's wrath comes when we mistakenly assume it is we who are in control. The psalmist envisions that God laughs, but then God reminds us of how it really is.



Read / Psalm 2



Reflect / Choose one of the following questions for reflection.

Is there some area in which you are still plotting in vain against God's sovereignty in your life? Is it time to surrender and enjoy his blessing instead?

As a nation, America is quickly moving from "In God We Trust" to "In Ourselves We Trust." When we presume to know better than God, we set ourselves up for an epic fail. What are some ways in which your individually getting right with God can be used to affect the nation's rightness with God?

Ponder the question presented in verse 1: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?" Now personalize it: Why do you rage and plot in vain?

Day 3

September 2



Pray / Thank the Lord that he never fails you, and for his forgiveness.

EVER HAVE A bad day as a result of sin in your life? How about a whole lot of bad days? Regardless of how your life is going at the moment, it no doubt is small compared to where David found himself in his dysfunctional relationships with his family, especially Absalom, when he wrote this Psalm.

David's inaction toward sin within his and his family's lives, and an apparent lack of interaction with God are playing out just as God promised they would through the prophet Nathan (when God called out David's sins with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 12). Amnon, Tamar, Absalom, Uriah, and Bathsheba . . . David's family skeletons are all out of the closet.

Absalom has rebelled against his own father (God's anointed king) and declared himself Israel's king. David's secret affair with Bathsheba is one-upped when Absalom publically rapes his father's concubines in broad daylight on the palace roof. There is only one way you can make it through a trial like that: *God!*



Read / Psalm 3



Reflect / Choose one of the following questions for reflection.

Take stock of your situation and then take the time to share with God where you find yourself currently. It's okay to state the obvious, even to God, when you pray. What is it that is on your heart or mind right this minute that you need to share with God?

Remember the solution to all your problems is the same thing it has always been and ever will be: *God* alone. Take time and thank him for his past deliverance, and ask for his deliverance again. What situation are you in the middle of currently that needs God in it?

Get some sleep. No, seriously. Because God is your shield, he has it covered. There is no need to lose sleep trying to figure your way out of where you find yourself. Let God be your salvation. Are you giving your problems over to God and then leaving them in his capable hands? If not, why not?

Day 4

September 3



Pray / Thank the Lord that he listens to and answers your prayers.

WHEN WE PRAY, does God need us to remind him of what he has done? What about what we are asking him to do? Does he really believe us when we make him empty promises, if only he will deliver on our requests? Of course not! In many ways the psalms recorded in the Bible are much like our own prayers in that God intends them for our benefit and not his own. God certainly has a better memory than we do, he already knows what we will ask of him before we do, and he knows that our intentions always will outrun our actions.

The problem in waiting on God is that our patience often runs out before his perfect deliverance arrives. Thank God that his patience exceeds ours and his deliverance is always right on time. God's forgiveness is so far beyond what we deserve. His love, offered in advance, is untainted with selfishness. God alone is, well, *God!*



Read / Psalm 4



Reflect / Choose one of the following questions for reflection.

Think about your sense of security for a moment. There is the government, your financial portfolio, your health, your job, home, family, and so many more factors to consider. What is the one true source of security that can give you peace and allow you to lie down and sleep in safety, according to this Psalm?

There are the many and the few. Throughout the Bible we are told time and again that even among God's special chosen people, Israel, there are those who are unfaithful to God. These are the "many," those who looked to the idols and gods of the nations around them rather than to the one true God who had set them apart as his own people. This psalm offers clues as to how to be among the few rather than the many. There is a definite theme for "how to" presented here. What is the theme, and why is it important?

Where does your sense of joy come from, and are you satisfied in that joy? Why or why not?

Day 5

September 4



Pray / No matter what is going on or how you're feeling, talk to God.

THERE ARE JUST some things in life you cannot do. For example, you cannot simply walk up to the White House, ask to see the president, and then tell him what you thought about his latest policy decisions. It is not going to happen, at least not without an invitation and a very uncomfortable background check that will find all those skeletons you've hidden in your closet.

Have you ever really stopped and thought about just how incredible it is that you can be granted an audience with the God of the universe whenever you want one? There are no appointments or background checks necessary, and he is never too busy to take your call. If you've never taken advantage of the incredible opportunity offered through the blood of his son, Jesus Christ, who died for your sins, make today the day you pray to God the Father and ask him to forgive you and take him up on his all-access pass.



Read / Psalm 5



Reflect / Choose one of the following questions for reflection.

To the world's way of thinking at the beginning of this Psalm seems almost insulting and disrespectful to God. Why would you pray if you did not think God would listen, pay attention, or act? Do you ever neglect prayer because you think God already knows and so you are just saving both you and God some time by not praying?

The limiting things about being human are the very things that make us human. For example, we can only see things from our finite perspective, and yet we are approaching an infinite God when we pray. God does not need to be reminded that he hates evil or that he will destroy evil. Often it is merely our own frustration pouring out in that he has not done things visibly enough, quickly enough, or to our own satisfaction. Think about how God is approached in prayer in the five psalms we have studied this week, and then think about how you approach God in prayer. Are you: Mindful of who he is? Bold enough to voice your frustrations? Overly cautious in your wording so as not to offend God with your prayer?

Please reread verses 7–8 and 11–12. What are the keys that allow us entry into God's house?

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