

May Answers

- 1) [May 1] The end of Absalom's revolt. When Absalom arrived at Jerusalem, Ahithophel, the grandfather of Bathsheba, advised him to rape David's concubines. This fulfilled God's word through Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 12:11–12), and it teaches us that the sin we commit in secret will find us out. Anytime Satan tries to convince us that no one will ever know, we should remember this story and reject his lies. God enabled Hushai to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel in answer to David's prayer (2 Sam 15:31; 17:14), and it should comfort us to know that the wisdom of the enemy is powerless against God's sovereign will. David wrote at least two songs during this ordeal, and they are an inspiring example of how to cast our cares on God. David poured out his heart to God and cried out for help, but he did not end his prayers in despair. Instead, he comforted his soul with thoughts of God, and he chose ("I will") to praise God in spite of his circumstances. David prepared his army for war and there was a great battle in the wooded hills of southern Gilead. Absalom's forces were defeated and Absalom himself was slain. When David learned of his son's death, he collapsed in grief. Joab angrily confronted David and reminded him that a good leader puts his own feelings and emotions aside and does what's best for his people. This shows us how easy it is to be so caught up in our own pain that we're blind to the sacrifices of those who love and support us. David's reaction to Absalom's death reveals that he blamed himself for everything that had gone wrong with his children. If we don't make the hard choices early in our children's lives, we will end up in that chamber over the gate, weeping with David in regret.

- 2) [May 2] David's return and Sheba's rebellion. David realized that the elders of Judah feared reprisal for what they had done, so he reached out to them with words of friendship and peace. Another man might have launched a campaign of retribution, but not David. He showed great generosity: he restored Mephibosheth, spared Shimei, and rewarded faithful Barzillai. This teaches us the importance of mercy when we have the upper hand on those who have wronged us. In spite of his best efforts, David's return to Jerusalem was marred by *another* rebellion. Sheba took advantage of the squabble between Judah and Israel over who had the honor of bringing the king across the Jordan, and he rallied Israel against David with the cry, "We have no portion in David!" This shows us how fickle people can be. We need to be careful lest we are carried about in the ever-changing winds of public opinion. Our decisions should be based on the principles and wisdom of God's Word. Abishai and Joab pursued Sheba to the city of Abel-beth-maacah and put an end to the revolt. A wise woman there spoke up and saved an entire city from ruin. Often the courage to speak a few words of wisdom can prevent great disaster (cf. Ecc 9:13–18). The kingdom had been restored, but the price had been high: over 20,000 men dead, the king's son slain, and the unity of Israel fractured. David had killed a single man in secret, but he reaped a bloody harvest of death and destruction.

- 3) [May 3] David's census of Israel. The story begins by saying that God's anger "burned against Israel," which means that there was already 'sin in the camp' (cf. Josh 7:1, 11; Jdg 2:11–14). When we sin, we give place to the devil, and God allowed Satan to entice David to number the people (1 Chr 21:1). Although the reason why the census was sinful is not clear (it may have been a violation of Num 1:49 and Exod 30:12), God made sure that David knew that what he was about to do was wrong (1 Chr 21:3). This teaches us that even when our own pride and stubbornness have caused us to rebel against God, He is faithful to warn us away from the path of sin. David's word prevailed over Joab and the army commanders, and Joab spent the next nine months numbering the people (although he refused to number Levi and Benjamin). When it was over, God was angry, and He struck Israel (1 Chr 21:7). David realized that he had sinned, and he confessed and repented before God. This teaches us that repentance is always the best first step. We should never cover our sin or

try to make things better on our own. God sent Gad the prophet to give David three choices for Israel's punishment, and David wisely cast himself on God's mercy. God kept the angel from destroying Jerusalem, and David built an altar where the angel had been standing. God answered with fire from heaven expressing forgiveness and approval, and David determined to build the temple on that very spot.

- 4) [May 4] David's psalms. Psalm 2 is a royal psalm which speaks of the enthronement of the Messiah (the LORD's Anointed). In this psalm, the Messiah recalls what God the Father said to Him: "You are my Son, today I have begotten you" (Ps 2:7b). This statement identifies the Messiah as the Son of God and emphasizes the Messiah's standing as "begotten" of the Father. In his sermon at Pisidian Antioch, Paul explained that this statement was fulfilled when Jesus rose from the dead and was exalted at God's right hand (Acts 13:33). Thus the Father "begot" the Son in the sense that He brought Jesus forth from the womb of the earth by resurrection and publicly proclaimed Him to be His Son. The author of Hebrews used this psalm to show that the Son is superior to the angels. His name is greater than theirs for His name is "Son of God" (Heb 1:5). Psalm 8 is another Messianic psalm in which David proclaimed God's glory and wondered, "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" (Ps 8:4). David continued by saying that God crowned "him" with glory and honor and "put all things under his feet." The NT repeatedly applies this psalm to Jesus, the God-man in whom this prophecy finds its true realization (Heb 2:5–9; 1 Cor 15:27; Eph 1:22). These psalms exalt God's precious Son, Jesus Christ, who is His Anointed, and who will one day rule the world in truth and justice! No wonder they call Him the Savior!

- 5) [May 5] David's psalms. Psalm 16 is the prayer of a man who took refuge in God. He loved the saints and rejected those who ran after other gods. He trusted in God, and he claimed the LORD as his "inheritance" (Ps 16:5–6). He said, "I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps 16:8–11). Peter later told the Jews that David was *not* speaking of himself in this psalm; he was speaking prophetically of Jesus (Acts 2:25–31). God did not allow His Son to "see corruption," but raised Him up from the dead and exalted Him at His right hand. "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).

- 6) [May 6] David's psalms. Psalm 22 is the psalm Jesus quoted as he hung on the cross. He cried, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps 22:1a), and the words of this psalm were fulfilled as he endured the agony of crucifixion. He was scorned and despised (Ps 22:6), he was mocked for his trust in you (Ps 22:7), his enemies gathered around him to stare and gloat (Ps 22:12–13, 16–17), his hands and feet were pierced (Ps 22:16), and they divided his garments and cast lots for his clothing (Ps 22:18). Yet there is an undercurrent of hope running throughout the psalm. Jesus remembered that the fathers trusted in God and were delivered (Ps 22:3–5). He also recalled with gratitude God's personal, lifelong care for him: "From my mother's womb you have been my God" (Ps 22:9–10). This theme of trust rises at last in a crescendo of joy: "You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!" (Ps 22:21b). Jesus rejoiced in the knowledge that his sacrifice would "bring many sons to glory," and he was not ashamed to call me his brother, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise" (Heb 2:10–12; Ps 22:22). God didn't despise the suffering of His faithful servant, and God didn't hide His face from him (Ps 22:24b). When Jesus cried, the Father heard him, and though he died, God raised him up in victory to everlasting life! Hallelujah!

- 7) [May 7] David's psalms. Psalm 26 shows us the peace and confidence that comes from a clear **conscience**. David said, "Vindicate [judge] me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. Prove me, O LORD, and **try** me; **test** my heart and my mind" (Ps 26:1–2). This teaches us that it's possible for our lives to pass the scrutiny of God's searching eye! How can this be done? By **keeping** His lovingkindness before our eyes (Ps 26:3a), by **walking** in the truth (Ps 26:3b), by **rejecting** the company of evil men (Ps 26:4–5), by **washing** ourselves in His cleansing blood (Ps 26:6), and by **loving** Him with all our heart (Ps 26:8). David is a testament to the fact that we can live a life of **innocence** and integrity, and that we too can stand "on level ground" (Ps 26:12).
- 8) [May 8] David's psalms. Psalm 31 was a favorite of several biblical characters. **Jonah's** prayer references it (Jonah 2:8), **Jeremiah** recalled it (Jer 20:10), and **Jesus'** last words repeated it: "Into your hand I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). This psalm of faith is a message of **encouragement** to us when we're battered and bruised by the storms of life. It calls us to be of good **courage** and to be **cheered** by David's example and experience. David found God to be a refuge in time of trouble, and he urges us to put our trust in God. We can say with joy, "Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who **fear** you" (Ps 31:19a). Psalm 37 is a balm for anyone who has been frustrated or disheartened by the prosperity of the **wicked**. "Don't **fret** over evildoers," God says, "They flourish for a time, but rest assured their day is coming. They will wither **quickly** like the grass. You will look around for them but they'll be **gone**. Their sword will enter their own heart. They will be utterly destroyed, and their posterity will be cut off. Rather than envy the wicked, let me tell you what I want you to do. **Trust** in me and do good. **Delight** yourself in me, and I'll give you the desires of your heart. **Commit** your way to me, and I'll act on your behalf. If you will **wait** on me, I'll bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday. I'll exalt you and give you the land, and you will dwell in peace forever!"
- 9) [May 9] David's psalms. In Psalm 38, David cried out to God in the midst of his misery and despair. God's hand of **discipline** was heavy on him, and the burden of his guilt was made all the more crushing by a physical **ailment**. David's sickness kept his loved ones "afar off," and it gave his enemies an opportunity to plot his downfall. What should we do when our sin has brought God's discipline and estranged us from our friends? How should we respond when our plight is of our own making and there is no one to blame but ourselves? This psalm has the answers to these questions. David teaches us that we should: (1) **confess** our iniquity and **repent** of our sin (Ps 38:18); (2) **mourn** the loss of a clear conscience and a right relationship with God (Ps 38:6); (3) **cast** ourselves on God's mercy and **cry** out to Him for relief (Ps 38:1); (4) remain **silent** before our enemies and **wait** for God to act (Ps 38:13–15); and (5) ask God to **save** us in spite of our foolishness (Ps 38:21–22). David's response to God's discipline is so instructive. Rather than giving up, David ran and threw himself into God's arms. That's what we need to do! Our sin should drive us closer to the cross, and our guilt should draw us nearer to God's side. He truly is our salvation! (Ps 38:22).
- 10) [May 10] David's psalms. Psalm 58 is an **imprecatory** psalm, a psalm that calls in the strongest terms for God's judgment on the wicked. David asked, "Do you rulers indeed speak justly? Do you judge uprightly among men?" (Ps 58:1 NIV). Those in positions of power should be examples of **virtue** and justice, but all too often they are full of **violence** and deceit. What should be done to those who abuse their power? What should happen to those who defraud the poor and kill the innocent? The Holy Spirit answered, "O God, **break** the teeth in their mouths; **tear** out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD! Let them vanish like the water that runs away; Let them be like the **snail** that dissolves into slime, like the stillborn child who never sees the sun" (Ps 58:6–8 NIV). This teaches us that the Spirit of Christ desires the **destruction** of the wicked. If they will not repent, then let them be swept away in judgment! It is right for us to **rejoice** in the wrath of God, and it is good for us to **delight** in the

vengeance of Christ. When the Son of God returns in power, a sharp sword will come from His mouth, and He will strike down the ungodly nations and tread the winepress of God's fury. When we truly understand how venomous the wicked are (Ps 58:4 NIV), we will gladly join Christ as He washes His feet in their blood. Then men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges the earth" (Ps 58:11 NIV). Hallelujah!

- 11) [May 11] David's psalms. Psalm 68 is a magnificent song that celebrates God's faithfulness to Israel and His victory over the wicked. It traces the establishment of God's kingdom in the past, and it looks forward to the defeat of all opposition in the future. In that day the entire world will acknowledge God/Christ as Lord and bring gifts to His throne. Paul later invoked the image of God's victory procession to explain that Christ descended to earth as the baby of Bethlehem, suffered and died, then rose in glorious power and ascended into heaven to be exalted at God's right hand (Eph 4:7–13). He triumphed over His enemies, and like a conquering king, He led His foes into captivity and gave gifts to His people (cf. Ps 68:18). The gifts He gave were the most precious that can be given, for they were the blessed Spirit's gifts of grace! They were given to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" and "for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11–12). When these gifts are exercised in love, the church achieves its full maturity: the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ! "Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!" (Ps 68:35).

- 12) [May 12] David's psalms. Psalm 109 teaches us that when someone repays our kindness with treachery, it is Christlike to pray against them. Indeed, Peter applied this psalm to Judas, "who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus" (Acts 1:15–20). David's example is important. He didn't seek personal revenge on those who betrayed him, and he didn't take matters into his own hands (Ps 109:27). Instead, he called on God to repay the wicked according to their deeds: "He loved to curse; let curses come upon him! He did not delight in blessing; may it be far from him!" (Ps 109:17). This is the spirit of Christ. It is God's will that the sins of the unrepentant wicked should fall on their own heads in judgment. Psalm 110 is one of the most important Messianic psalms. It is quoted by the NT more than any other psalm. In this psalm, the Father speaks to the Son, whom David acknowledged as "my Lord," and says, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool" (Ps 110:1). This shows that the Messiah is both Son of God and King of kings (cf. Matt 22:41–46). The Father goes on to declare, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4). This means that the Messiah is also a High Priest who will offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people (cf. Heb 7). How wonderful to know that God's Son, Jesus the Messiah, is both King *and* Priest. He is able to save us from our sins, and one day He will rule the world in righteousness! Hallelujah!

- 13) [May 13] David's psalms. Some of them are part of a collection of fifteen psalms (120–134) which all have the title, "A Song of Ascents." It is likely that these songs were sung by those who traveled up the mountain to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals. As such they are pilgrim songs, songs which express anticipation and joy at the thought of worshiping God. Psalm 122 proclaims the pilgrim's eagerness to reach Jerusalem: "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'" Upon arrival, the pilgrim offered a prayer for the peace of the city: "Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!" How appropriate it is to pray for the safety and security of the place where we have the freedom to worship God! Psalm 124 reflects on the many dangers Israel faced over the years by those who wanted to destroy them: "Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth." This teaches us to remember God's help in the past and rest on His promise for the future. Psalm 131 speaks of the pilgrim who rejects pride and presumption and quiets his soul before God: "Like a weaned child is my soul within me." What a beautiful picture of the contentment that is found

when we fully surrender to God's will. Psalm 133 celebrates the fellowship of the saints: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" This reminds us how important it is to complete the joy of Christ by being of the same mind with our fellow believers (Phil 2:2).

- 14) [May 14] The last of David's psalms. Psalm 145 is an alphabet of praise. It is the last Davidic psalm in the Psalter and the last of his acrostic psalms (cf. Ps 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 145). In this psalm, David sings the praises of the King: God's greatness is beyond all measure (v. 3), God has done mighty acts (v. 4), the glorious splendor of God's majesty is worthy of meditation (v. 5), God is good and righteous (v. 7), God is kind, merciful, patient, loving, and compassionate (vv. 8–9), God's Kingdom will never end (v. 13), God provides for our daily needs (vv. 15–16), God is righteous and kind in all His ways (v. 17), God is near to all who call on Him (v. 18), God fulfills the desire of those who fear Him (v. 19), and God hears our cry and rescues us from our distress (vv. 19–20). As we read, we can't help but be caught up and borne along by David's exuberance for God's glory. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords! He is the well-spring of wisdom and the doorway of deliverance. His promise never fails, His light never falters, His goodness never ceases, His mercy never ends, His love never weakens, His Word never changes, His patience never tires, and His peace never fades! Hallelujah!

- 15) [May 15] Asaph's psalms. Asaph was a Levite musician who played a leading role in worship during the time of David. His descendants also carried on the family tradition of music (Ezra 3:10). In Psalm 73, Asaph described his struggle with being envious of the wicked: "They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches" (Ps 73:5, 7, 12). What made the prosperity of the wicked so galling was the fact that Asaph was suffering: "All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning" (Ps 73:13–14). However, Asaph had enough sense to keep his emotions in check, and he did not speak against God to other believers (v. 15). Instead, he made his way to God's house and worshipped. Then he realized: "Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors!" (Ps 73:17–19). Asaph teaches us: "Those who are far from you will perish, but as for me, it is good to be near God" (Ps 73:27–28).

- 16) [May 16] Asaph's psalms. Psalm 78 is an inspired and insightful commentary on the early history of Israel, and it provides a means of obeying God's command to teach the next generation (Deut 4:9–10; 6:7, 20–25). What better way to teach our children about God than through song? Asaph wrote powerfully of God's mighty acts. He told of the great plagues God brought on the Egyptians, he recalled the crossing of the Red Sea, and he remembered the many times God provided food and water in the desert. Yet running like a black thread through the psalm is the remembrance of the people's unbelief. They were "a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God" (Ps 78:8). Were they amazed by God's miracles? Yes, but "they forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them" (Ps 78:11). Were they refreshed by the water God gave them? Yes, but they spoke against Him saying, "He struck the rock so that water gushed out and streams overflowed. Can he also give bread or provide meat for his people?" (Ps 78:19–20). Did the people seek God when He punished them? Yes, but they "flattered him with their mouths; they lied to him with their tongues. Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant" (Ps 78:34–37). This psalm warns us not to forget God's works: "Set your hope in God" and "Keep his commandments" (Ps 78:7).

- 17) [May 17] The psalms of Heman and Ethan. Heman was a singer in the choir known as "the sons of Korah" (cf. 1 Chr 6:31–33; 2 Chr 5:11–12), and he was famous for his wisdom (1 Kgs 4:31). Heman wrote Psalm 88, a lament psalm in which the speaker cries out day and night before God. This psalm

is unique, for it is the only psalm in the Psalter that has no shift to thanksgiving, no vow of praise, and no expression of hope. However, woven throughout the psalm are clues that the speaker knows God to be good and merciful. God is “the God of my salvation” (v. 1), God “works wonders” (v. 10), God has “steadfast love” (v. 11), and God is faithful and righteous (vv. 11–12). This psalm teaches us that even when we’re discouraged and depressed, we can call out to God. God will hear our cry and show Himself faithful. Ethan the Ezrahite was also famous for his wisdom. He wrote Psalm 89, a psalm that celebrates God’s covenant with David and praises God for His mighty power. Toward the end, the psalm shifts abruptly from praise to sadness, and it speaks of a time when the king suffered humiliation: “But now you have cast off and rejected; you are full of wrath against your anointed. You have renounced the covenant with your servant; you have defiled his crown in the dust” (Ps 89:38–39). It is uncertain whether this was a reference to David’s humiliation at the hands of Absalom or a prophecy of some future trouble which would come to Judah’s king. In either case, the psalm ends by asking God to remember His lovingkindness and faithfulness to David. This psalm teaches us to put our confidence in God. When circumstances seems to contradict God’s promise, we can rest assured that what God has said will come to pass (Ps 89:34–36).

- 18) [May 18] The psalms of Korah’s sons. This Levitical family was descended from the rebel leader Korah, whose children were spared, to our great gain, when he died for his rebellion (Num 26:10ff.). Some of this family became doorkeepers and guardians of the temple (1 Chr 9:17ff.; cf. Ps 84:1, 10), while others were singers and musicians in the choir founded under David by Heman. Psalm 45 is a hymn celebrating a royal wedding, and as the title says, it is a “love song.” It is also Messianic, and it celebrates the coming union of Christ and his bride (cf. Eph 5:23ff.). The psalm begins by addressing “the king,” and it praises him for his splendor and majesty. But this isn’t just any king, for this king is called “God” in v. 6, and it becomes clear that the writer is speaking of the Messiah, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. This psalm, together with Psalm 110, clearly depicts the Messiah as divine. His throne is “forever and ever,” and the scepter of His kingdom is “a scepter of righteousness.” Jesus loved righteousness and hated wickedness: “Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions” (Ps 45:6–7). The author of Hebrews, guided by the Holy Spirit, quoted these verses as part of his argument for the superiority of the Son to the angels (Heb 1:8–9). The psalm goes on to picture the wedding of the King. The bride will be led to Him in beautiful clothing, and she will enter His palace in gladness and rejoicing. What a wonderful picture of the glorious marriage of the Lamb.

- 19) [May 19] The psalms of Korah’s sons. Several of these psalms express a love of and a delight in the city of Zion, Jerusalem. Psalm 48 says, “Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city of the great King” (Ps 48:1–2). Psalm 84 says, “How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God” (Ps 84:1–2). Psalm 87 says, “On the holy mount stands the city he founded; the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God” (Ps 87:1–3). These psalms praised Jerusalem, not for being the largest or strongest city on earth, but for being the city “of our God,” the city where God lived among His people, and where He ruled in holiness and power. Zion’s greatness came from its connection to God, for He had graciously chosen to build His temple there, and He acted as “a sun and shield” for the city. One day Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem, and the nations of the earth will come to worship Him (Zech 14:16). “In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious” (Isa 11:10 NIV). I look forward to the day when Jerusalem will be the capital of the world!

- 20) [May 20] The anonymous psalms. This serves to remind us that the Holy **Spirit** is the true author of Scripture (2 Pet 1:20–21). Psalm 1 is a beautiful and inspiring introduction to the whole Psalter. It stands as a faithful doorkeeper, reminding us that there are only **two** paths in life: the **broad** way of wickedness and the **narrow** way of holiness. The road less traveled is not always an easy one. We must reject the **counsel** of the wicked, avoid the **way** of sinners, and shun the **company** of scoffers. Instead our hearts should find delight in God's **Law**, and we should **meditate** on His Word day and night. God's law reveals His **character**, and it shows us how to **love** Him and love others. If we abide in God's Word by **keeping** His commands (John 15:7–10), we will be like a "tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither" (Ps 1:3). All that we do will **prosper**. Not always in the way that the world counts success, but in the way that will last for eternity (Matt 6:19–21). And when the righteous and the wicked face the judgment, God will know our way, "but the way of the wicked will perish" (Ps 1:6).
- 21) [May 21] Three of today's psalms begin with the triumphant cry, "The LORD **reigns!**" (Ps 93:1; 97:1; 99:1). In these songs, the writer pictures God's supremacy by showing how much stronger He is than other great forces in the world. In Psalm 93, the LORD is mightier than the **seas** (Ps 93:3–4). In Psalm 97, the LORD is mightier than the **idols** of the wicked (Ps 97:3, 7, 9–10). In Psalm 99, the LORD is mightier than the **nations** (Ps 99:1–3). What is the significance of this truth? How should we react? First, we should **rejoice** (97:1, 12)! Second, we should **praise** and **worship** God alone (Ps 99:2–3, 5, 9). Last, we should **reflect** God's character and **imitate** His ways (Ps 97:8, 10a; 99:4).
- 22) [May 22] Psalm 102 is the prayer of "one **afflicted**" (v. 1). In the **Septuagint**, the prayer ends with v. 22, and the rest of the psalm is God's answer to the psalmist, who is called "**Lord**" in v. 25. This means the psalm is **Messianic**. The author of **Hebrews** later quoted Ps 102 as a statement made by the **Father** to the **Son**, and he used it to show that the Messiah, the Son, is greater than the **angels** (Heb 1:10–12; Ps 102:25–27). Thus the psalm speaks first of the Messiah's suffering (vv. 1–11), and then of His anticipation of the future Kingdom (vv. 12–22). At the end, the Father told Jesus that the days of His **earthly** life would indeed be few (vv. 23–24), but then God reminded Him that He was the **Creator** of the heavens: "They may perish, but you remain...your years will have no end" (vv. 26–27). Thus Psalm 102 is a beautiful testament to the **eternity** of God's Son, Jesus Christ!
- 23) [May 23] This is the first of three groupings of psalms called the **Hallel** psalms. The word is Hebrew for "**praise**," and it's the first part of the word "**Hallelujah**" (lit. "praise YAH" or "praise the LORD"). The first group, Psalms 113–118, is called the "**Egyptian Hallel**" because of the emphasis on the exodus from Egypt in Psalm 114. The Egyptian Hallel played an important role in the liturgy of the **Passover**. By custom, the first two psalms were sung before the meal and the remaining four afterwards, so these were probably the last psalms **Jesus** sang before his passion (cf. Mark 14:26). Psalm 118 was especially significant to him, for the ring of **enemies** spoken of in Ps 118:10–13 had indeed surrounded him and a cruel death lay in store for him. Yet he encouraged himself with a verse from the victory song at the **Red Sea**: "The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation" (Ps 118:14; cf. Exod 15:2). Jesus knew that God would not give him over to death, for even though he died, the grave could not **hold** him! (Ps 118:17–18). God threw wide the gates of righteousness, and Jesus entered through them with thanksgiving. Truly, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the **cornerstone**. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps 118:22–24). What is the day that the LORD has made? The day of the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ, and that is indeed a day for rejoicing! Let's join with the psalmist and sing, "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!" (Ps 118:29). Praise the LORD!

- 24) [May 24] Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the longest book of the OT. This psalm is a “Torah Psalm,” and along with Psalms 1 and 19, its focus is on God’s law. It was written in acrostic form: each of the eight verses in the twenty-two stanzas begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are a total of 176 verses and all of them are exultant in their love of God’s word. In almost every verse, the psalmist makes some reference to Scripture: law, testimony, precept, statute, commandment, promise, judgment, and word. The terms have different shades of meaning (e.g., God’s instruction, decisions, truth, commands, rules, etc.), but they all center on the same theme: God’s revelation in written word. As we read Psalm 119, we hear the voice of a man who is under attack by the wicked. They are bent on destroying him (v. 95), and their attacks have taken the form of derision (v. 22), slander (v. 69) and intrigue (vv. 23, 85). The psalmist is a young man (vv. 9, 99), and he is sensitive to their scorn (v. 39). His isolation makes him feel “small and despised” (v. 141), and he describes himself as drained and dried up (vv. 25, 28, 83). He vacillates between being saddened and infuriated by his experience, reacting first with tears (v. 136) and then with “hot indignation” and “disgust” (vv. 53, 158). Yet the persecution has driven him closer to God. He knows that at times he has strayed, but he accepted God’s discipline with gratitude, and the practice of his life is to keep God’s precepts (vv. 67, 71, 75). He is determined to live by God’s word, and his two repeated requests, “Give me understanding” and “Give me life,” show that he is eager to learn and to be renewed by God’s life-giving law. In all, he is a man we identify with and understand. He is also a man that we look up to and want to be like.
- 25) [May 25] As the psalmist studied and meditated on God’s word, he took delight in the many benefits of Scripture. First, the law gives liberty: “And I will walk in liberty, For I seek Your precepts” (v. 45 NASB). This teaches us that liberty is the ability to do what we should, not the freedom to do what we want. The service of sin is slavery; the service of God is liberty. Those who seek “the free life” will only find it in the careful observance of God’s commands. Second, the law gives light: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (v. 105). This light is a light to walk by, and it will keep us from stumbling into sin. For this reason the psalmist repeatedly asked God for understanding, and he recognized that “the unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple” (v. 130 ESV). Third, the law gives life: “I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life” (v. 93). Those who keep God’s word will be restored (v. 37) and refreshed (v. 50). God’s commands bring life because they turn our hearts toward Him, the source of life. It’s no wonder that the psalmist rejoiced in the law: “I find my delight in your commandments, which I love” (v. 47). When we love God’s law, we love God, for His word is a revelation of Himself. When we keep His law, we show our love for Him, for Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23). I say, ‘Here is my heart, enter in!’
- 26) [May 26] The rest of the “Song of Ascents” psalms. These songs were likely sung by those who traveled up the mountain to Jerusalem for the three annual festivals. These psalms are pilgrim songs, songs which express anticipation and joy at the thought of worshiping you. The collection begins with Psalm 120, a psalm which recounts the author’s weariness of dwelling among deceitful people: those who “hate peace” and “are for war” (Ps 120:6–7). The psalmist called out to God in his trouble, and God answered him. How comforting to know that God hears us when we cry to Him! Psalm 121 is an encouraging answer to the question, “From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps 121:1b–4). Psalm 123 echoes this thought and builds on the theme of focusing our eyes on God: “To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid servant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he has mercy upon us” (Ps 123:1–2). These psalms teach us the importance of

lifting up our eyes from the cares and trials of life and focusing our hearts and minds on God. Like Peter on the Sea of Galilee, if we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, we can walk on the waters which seek to drown our souls.

- 27) [May 27] The last of the Psalms. Psalm 136 is dedicated to God's hesed: His "steadfast love" (ESV) and "lovingkindness" (NASB). This psalm declares that God is God of gods and Lord of lords (Ps 136:2–3). He is Creator, Rescuer, Victor, Friend-in-need and God of heaven. The repetition of the phrase, olam hesed ("your lovingkindness is everlasting"), serves as an audible affirmation of this glorious truth, and we can rejoice in the knowledge that His love for us endures forever. Psalm 148 reveals that all creation, in heaven (vv. 1–6) and on earth (vv. 7–14), is like a majestic symphony, for each part joins together in harmonious praise of God's name. This is a beautiful picture of how we as believers should praise Him: individually, yet as part of the great choir of believers across the world. Psalm 149 suggests several ways that we can praise God. We can praise Him by speaking, singing, dancing and playing musical instruments. God created our bodies and music, and He is honored when we use them both to praise His name. Truly, "the Lord takes pleasure in his people" (Ps 149:4).
- 28) [May 28] Adonijah's attempted coup d'état. Adonijah, David's oldest living son, decided that he, not Solomon (cf. 1 Chr 22:9), should be the next king. He began by imitating the example of Absalom: "He prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him" (cf. 1 Kgs 1:5 and 2 Sam 15:1). How could he get away with such behavior? Because his father never corrected or disciplined him (1 Kgs 1:6a). This teaches us that it's possible for great and godly men to fail as parents. It also shows us that our children do not inherit our faith. Godly character must be instilled in them from the earliest age, and much time, effort, patience and discipline must be expended to set them on the right path (cf. Prov 22:6). David failed to correct his son, and rather than being a source of pride in his old age, Adonijah was busy plotting to seize the kingship. His plan almost worked, and if not for Nathan's quick thinking and Bathsheba's reminder, Adonijah would have been Israel's next king. David took decisive action and had Solomon crowned king at Gihon. Solomon's first decision was to dismiss Adonijah and send him home. He could have killed Adonijah, but instead he had mercy. This was not weakness on Solomon's part; rather, it demonstrated his authority and power. Choosing to forgive a personal attack shows more strength than lashing out in revenge.
- 29) [May 29] David's preparations for the construction of the temple. This reading teaches us the importance of organization and planning for the future. David worked hard to make sure that Solomon would inherit a functional, efficient and robust administration. David's organization of the Levites shows that there were many ways to contribute to the ministry of the temple. Some cleaned the courts and chambers (1 Chr 23:28), some helped with cooking the showbread (1 Chr 23:29), some worshipped God with music and song (1 Chr 25), some were gatekeepers (1 Chr 26:1–19), and some were in charge of God's treasuries (1 Chr 26:20–28). The rest of the tribes gave tithes to support the Levites as they served in the temple and joined with them in worship. In this way, everyone had a part in the work of the ministry. This shows that all of us have a part to play in God's service. The Holy Spirit has given each of us a gift that we can use to build up Christ's body (cf. 1 Cor 12:4–7). We should develop our gifts and use them to the best of our ability (Rom 12:4–8).
- 30) [May 30] Solomon's second crowning and the death of David. Solomon was young [max of 25 years old] and inexperienced, and David realized the enormous task of building the temple weighed heavily on him. So David took time to encourage him and remind him that God had specifically chosen him for this job. He challenged him: "Be courageous and act" (1 Chr 28:10 NASB). This teaches us that when God gives us a task, He also gives us the ability and power to accomplish that

task. The size of the job can cause us to freeze in fear, but God's words are a remedy for this: 'Don't **focus** on how big the task is; instead, get to work!' Getting **started** is often the most difficult part of any job. As we work, we can rest in the knowledge that God is with us. He will never fail us or forsake us (1 Chr 28:20). As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon: "Show yourself a **man**" (1 Kgs 2:2). What is the essence of manliness? "**Keep** the charge of the Lord your God, **walking** in his ways and keeping his commandments." Those who obey, will "**prosper** in all that they do" (1 Kgs 2:3).

- 31) [May 31] Solomon's kingdom established. When Adonijah asked for Abishag as his wife, Solomon immediately perceived his true **motive**. Abishag was considered part of the king's harem, and possessing the king's harem was equivalent to claiming the **throne**. Solomon took decisive action and removed the threats to his rule. Adonijah was executed, Abiathar was banished, Joab was killed, and Shimei was confined. This teaches us the importance of being "**sober** and **vigilant**," for like Solomon, we too have enemies who wish to destroy us (1 Pet 5:8). We must train ourselves to recognize the schemes of the devil and deal with each temptation appropriately. Some temptations may require us to **eliminate** something from our lives. Others may cause us to put some **distance** between ourselves and another person. Some may compel us to put **boundaries** in our lives in order to shield ourselves from a weakness. Whatever the case, we need **wisdom** and discernment in order to guard ourselves from the attacks of the enemy. Solomon recognized his own need for wisdom, and when you came to him in a dream, he asked you for "wisdom and knowledge," and an "understanding mind (lit. 'hearing heart') to govern your people" (2 Chr 1:10; 1 Kgs 3:9). Solomon wisely chose wisdom and discernment over great wealth. How true it is that "those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction" (1 Tim 6:9).