

Songs for the  
**Sojourn**

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artistic expressions on the  
Psalms of Ascents



a collaborative work between Bellwether Arts and Cardiphonia



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The Bible text in this book, unless otherwise noted, is borrowed from  
The American Standard Version.

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# Forward

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Bruce Benedict

“They are a half-and-half mixture of a book of folk songs and a book of hymns;... much more domestic than your hymn book, and more tolerant of human, unregenerate, unrefined feeling; yet more profound, more open to the pressures of glory, than what you find in your secular song-book.”

— Erik Routley, *Ascent to the Cross*

Welcome to the Songs for the Sojourn visual devotional. This exploration of the Psalms of Ascents began in a small bookshop years ago when I stumbled upon “Ascent to the Cross” by Erik Routley. This series of lectures for Holy Week introduced me to the psalms that Jesus and the disciples would have sung through the week of passover. This liturgical orientation to the psalms + the images of Aaron Collier forever changed how I experience the psalms - both personally and in the corporate worshipping life of the church.

I’ve been ruminating on a larger exploration of the Psalms of Ascents since 2004 when I worked at Redeemer Presbyterian in downtown Indianapolis. We spent a few summers in the psalms and the Ascents collection quickly became an anchor for engaging the immersive world of the Psalms. Later while at Christ the King in Raleigh, NC I worked with Elliot Grudem who loved the psalms and collaborated with me on a worship renewal grant from the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship. This was the Ascents psalms on steroids. We preached each one, wrote small group curriculum, crafted liturgies, commissioned art and song and learned as a community how to worship our way through the psalms finishing with

Holy Week. Our prayer was to re-cultivate the psalms in our churches worshipping life by joining their song with the songs that Jesus would have sung on his way to the cross.

For most of my adult life the psalms were prayed here and there but largely given lip service in the worship of the church. Reading Carl Trueman's article "What Can Miserable Christians Sing?" was further fuel on the fires of conviction that the church needed to find a way to live into the psalms. We hope that this interdisciplinary celebration of the psalms inspires you to incorporate the psalms in a more substantial way into your worship of the triune God.

Bruce Benedict

March 2018

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*"Songs Of Ascent" Pictured right*  
Aaron Collier - 1997







# Psalm 120

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Jason Dorsey

It should not be this way. But it is. The first song of the pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple should be about the joy of worshipping God and the peaceful relationships of the worshipping community. Instead, the first *Song of Ascents* is a groan of distress.

What is the cause of the Psalmist's distress?

It is the lying lips and deceitful tongues that surround him (vs. 1-2); that he lives in the midst of those who "hate peace" and are "for war" (vs. 7). He compares those among whom he dwells to the pagans who do not know God: "Woe to me that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar" (vs. 5).

Nevertheless, the Psalmist rejoices because in His distress God answered him (vs. 1). God's answer is found in verse four. When the Psalmist asks, "what... shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue?" the answer comes, "A warrior's sharp arrows, with glowing coals of the broom tree (vs. 3-4)!" In short, God has arrows of truth and justice aimed at those who attack the Psalmist. Derek Kidner says that the liar "wounding though his weapons are...will be destroyed with far more potent shafts than lies: God's arrows of truth and coals of judgment."

Most who have spent time as a member of the church - the community on pilgrimage to heaven - know the reality of this Psalm. They know that the church is a mixed community; that scattered among the saints are liars, gossips, slanderers, and sociopaths who smile to your face but attack you behind your back.

The first *Song of Ascents* teaches that Christians should expect to be part of this mixed community; more importantly, it teaches us how. The Psalmist does not take up the weapons of violence – lies, gossip, slander, false reports, the whispers, winks and words of those on the attack. He does not even defend himself. Instead maintaining his integrity as a man of peace, he cries out to God in prayer. Reflecting on this Psalm, the preacher Charles Spurgeon gave this counsel: “Silence to man and prayer to God are the best cures for the evil of slander.”

How can we stay silent?

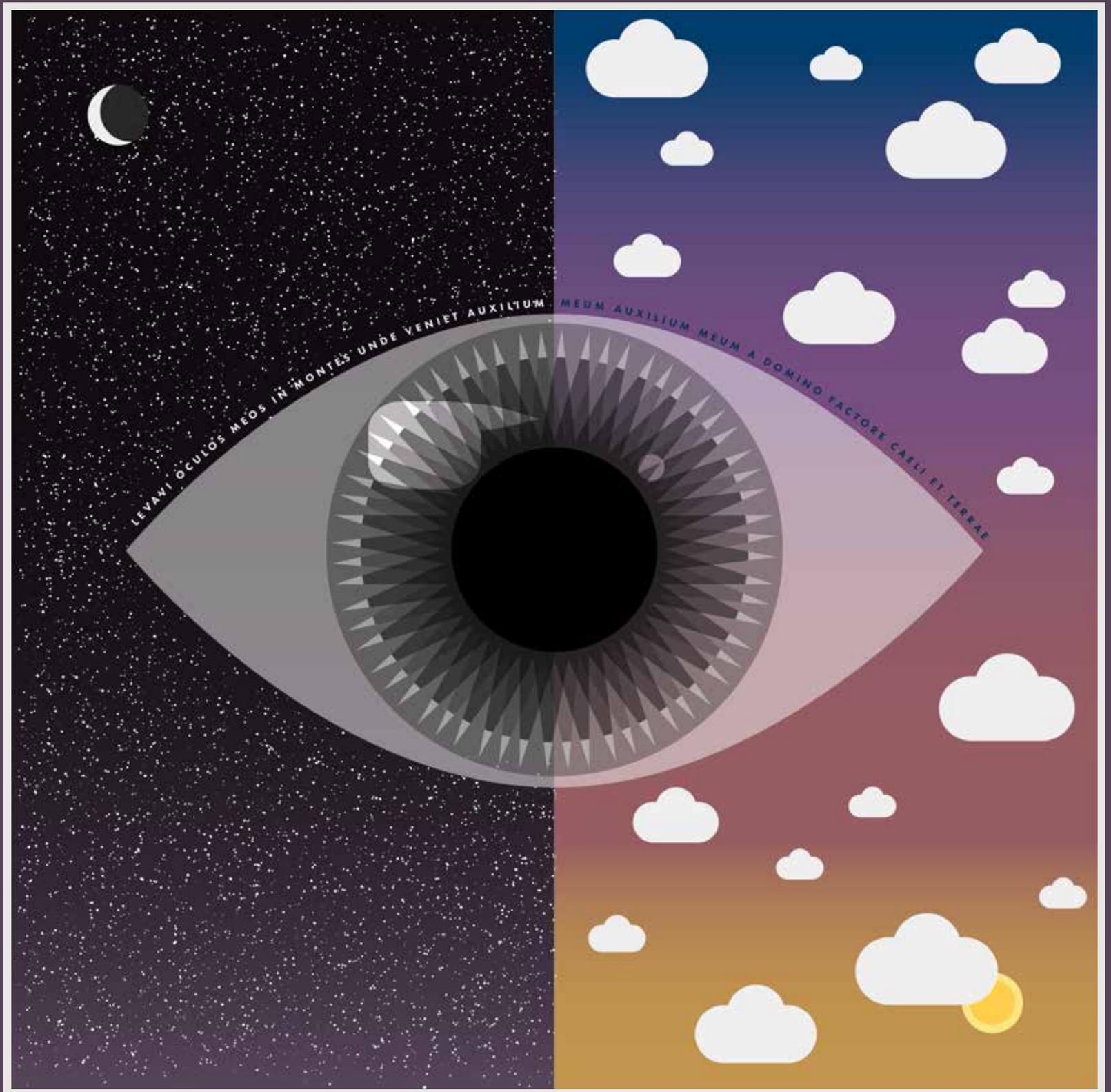
Only when we trust that God will be our Defender. Jesus Christ our Lord modeled how to live this Psalm. He lived among those who were for war and felt the attack of those bent on destroying Him with lying lips and deceiving tongues. When he stood before Pilate and was falsely accused he did not open his mouth but entrusted himself to God His Defender. Jesus did more than just model this Psalm. He personally became our Defender. On the cross he bore our sins, including our lying lips and deceitful tongues, and took the arrow of God’s truth and justice that we deserved.

As Christians, our life in the church will include the distress of being part of a community where many, despite their outward appearance, are liars, deceivers, and haters of peace. When we feel the distress that this causes we should follow the example of the Psalmist and of our Lord Jesus, praying to God for deliverance and trusting Him to bring swift judgment to those who attack us. And when we doubt that God will defend us or feel that God’s judgment is not as swift as it should be, which we will, we must remember that on the cross our Savior took the arrow of God’s truth and justice that we deserved.

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<sup>1</sup> Commentator Derek Kidner comments “Meshech and Kedar are so far apart (steppe dwellers of the far north, Ezk. 39:1ff and Arab neighbors of Israel to the southeast) that they can only be coupled here as a general term for the heathen. If the “I” of the psalm is Israel personified these two names will summarize the Gentile world, far and near, in which Israel is dispersed. Otherwise...they must be taken as the psalmist’s figurative names for the company he is in: as foreign as the remotest peoples, and as implacable as his Arab kinsmen.” Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, Intervarsity Press, 1973, pp.430-431.

<sup>2</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalm 73-150*, p. 430.



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*"Psalm 121"*  
Joey Novak - 2017\*

# Psalm 121

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I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:

From whence shall my help come?

My help cometh from the LORD,

Who made heaven and earth.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:

He that keepeth thee will not slumber.

Behold, he that keepeth Israel

Will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD is thy keeper;

the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

The sun shall not smite thee by day,

Nor the moon by night.

Jehovah will keep thee from all evil;

He will keep thy soul.

Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in

From this time forth and for evermore.

# Psalm 121

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Joseph Novak

The shadowy sentinels of the Judean Hills loomed in the distance as the column of pilgrims paused to rest. As the fire began to crackle, sparks spraying constellations into the thick desert air, the prayers began. *I raise my eyes toward the mountains*, one pilgrim intoned earnestly, *does my help come from them?*

The pilgrim knew that on those mountain peaks rested ancient shrines of power, hewn-stone altars built for the pantheons of local religions. The heights have always been thin places where the boundary to the divine realm seems to become porous and, at times, even traversable. There, collapsing between summit and peak, gasping for breath in the waning oxygen of the high-altitude, one pauses in the atmospheric stillness hoping for an encounter with the divine.

*I raise my eyes toward the mountains*, she whispered in wonder as she wandered past the tip-top edges of the Judean Hills, her heavy heart heaving for heavenly revelation, her saltwater-drunk spirit searching for some sign signaling the onset of transfiguration—*does help come from those places? Can those gods from those altars rescue me?*

Daughter Jerusalem rose before her, resting as a sleeping child in the rocky arms of Moriah and Zion—hills far smaller than those in the distance. The pilgrim looked at the ridges on the horizon and saw other mountains—taller mountains, bigger mountains, older mountains. She felt the weight of her burden she carried, her bitter baskets filled with unrealized hopes. She glanced again at the lights of the holy city. *Can it be that my help is to*

*be found on this meager hilltop? My pain is too great for a pint-sized-mountain-dwelling god!* She stared into the distance, spirit longing for gods who preferred taller mountains. She quietly wept, brushing her grief-birthered tears hurriedly away.

Suddenly her sacred space of doubt and cynicism is besieged by a chorus of voices—pilgrims chanting the rest of the hymn; their atonal melody and cut-time rhythm careens off the rocks and through valleys, refracting off the stony-faced cliffs and rugged faces of those many-peaked mountains. Despite all evidence to the contrary, they sang relentlessly:

*Our help comes from YHWH, the One who created the heavens and the earth.*

The pilgrim listens, her crumbling faith slowly buttressed by the reminder that she is traveling to not just any old mountain god, but to the One who fashioned the heavens and the earth and whose presence no mountain could constrain. She heard the young children join in with the melody, their hesitant, sing-song voices speaking solemn words of comfort to her war-weary soul:

*The One who keeps you shall not slumber.*

*For the one who keeps Israel does not slumber and does not sleep.*

Tears tumbled freely down dusty cheeks as the pilgrim glanced up into the darkening skies to see the heavenly planetarium illumining the night. The denizens of the galaxy, neatly suspended in their places, add their atmospheric voices to the now-ringing anthem as they chant along with the travelers:

Stars: YHWH is your Preserver!

Moon: *YHWH is your shade beside you!*

Planets: *YHWH guards you from all evil, protecting your whole being.*

Her spirit bolstered by a sudden wellspring of comfort, the pilgrim glances at her traveling companions who have joined hands and are gazing up toward Jerusalem, eyes tracking toward the holiest of holy places where Lord YHWH chose to make his glory accessible. One of the pilgrims beckons her over to stand with them as they prepare for their last day of travel. Together in one voice, they pronounce their faith:

*YHWH keeps your going out and your coming in from now until forever.*

In the stillness of that quiet night, long after the final note was sung, when the only sound to be heard was the crackle of sparks and the breathing of sleeping travelers, the tired and weary pilgrim curled up in her bedroll. Before she permits her mind to descend into the depths of a well-deserved rest, she addresses the sleeping creation sprawled out before her with one final rousing homily:

My help comes from YHWH, the one who created the heavens and the earth.



# Psalm 122

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I was glad when they said unto me,  
    Let us go unto the house of the LORD.  
Our feet are standing  
    Within thy gates, O Jerusalem,  
Jerusalem, that art builded  
    As a city that is compact together;  
Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD,  
    For an ordinance for Israel,  
    To give thanks unto the name of the LORD.  
For there are set thrones for judgment,  
    The thrones of the house of David.  
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
    They shall prosper that love thee.  
Peace be within thy walls,  
    And prosperity within thy palaces.  
For my brethren and companions' sakes,  
    I will now say, Peace be within thee.  
For the sake of the house of the LORD our God  
    I will seek thy good.

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*“Shalom Within Your Walls” Pictured right*  
Mitchell Conrad - 2017\*

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# Psalm 122

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Richard Ray

Imagine what it might have been like to be a Jewish pilgrim making your way to worship at the temple during one of the three annual festivals. You're traveling with your extended family and others from your village. The road is rocky, as Roman roads often are out here on the edge of the known world. The dust - seemingly alive - rises from the path, eventually finding its way into your parched throat, your nostrils, your eyes. It covers you like a garment. Your feet are already well calloused - your daily movements always and only involve walking. Leather sandals provide some protections from the sharp rocks and the thorny brambles, but only some. Perhaps you've come from as far as Nazareth, or even Bethsaida. One hundred miles over the course of perhaps five days. Maybe you're carrying your child on your shoulders. She's not too heavy, not at first. You are worried about being robbed - or worse - by bandits who live to harass your pilgrimage. At night you and yours huddle close to the fire. You are scorched by day and frozen by night. Night camped near the road is the province of animals and creeping things. As you walk you try to sustain conversation with your fellow pilgrims. There aren't enough words to pave the road all the way to Jerusalem. Eventually you find yourself alone in the presence of the shuffling masses of thousands as groups from Nain, Sychor, and Arimathea merge with yours along the road. The endless road.

But then, a lone voice rises near the front of the group. A note against the backdrop of footfalls, clanging cooking pots, and fractious pack animals

carrying offerings for the temple sacrifices. Thin and lonesome at first, it's joined by one or two others. Without direction a dozen take up the chant. And then a hundred or more. The sound echoes off the hillsides of the Jordan valley, alerting others in the caravan who break the interminable monotony of pilgriming with song:

*I lift up my eyes to the mountains—  
where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot slip—  
he who watches over you will not slumber;  
indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.  
The Lord watches over you—  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;  
the sun will not harm you by day,  
nor the moon by night.  
The Lord will keep you from all harm—  
he will watch over your life;  
the Lord will watch over your coming and going  
both now and forevermore.*

The women and the children now join in, praising God in song as they walk:

*I rejoiced with those who said to me,  
“Let us go to the house of the Lord.”  
Our feet are standing*

*in your gates, Jerusalem.  
Jerusalem is built like a city  
that is closely compacted together.  
That is where the tribes go up—  
the tribes of the Lord.*

And with one accord the moving dust cloud that is the people of Israel raises its voice and cries out to heaven itself:

*I lift up my eyes to you,  
to you who sit enthroned in heaven.  
As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master,  
as the eyes of a female slave look to the hand of her mistress,  
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,  
till he shows us his mercy.*

Songs of praise lift the pilgrims' chins from their chests. Their gaze takes leave of their feet and they look up, up to the heights, scanning for the temple and the God of Hosts. Up from the dust to the heavens from whence comes their salvation.

We are all pilgrims, you and I. Each of us experiences our road toward God's "celestial city" - at least from time to time - as dusty, dry, lonely, rough, and littered with terrors. In these moments let us join together and look up. Let us go up. Together we'll sing a new song unto the Lord, from whence all of our help comes.

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*"Psalm 122 - Patience" Pictured right  
Aaron Collier - 2007\**







# Psalm 123

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Casey Reagan

“So our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us.”

No matter what kind of life you’ve lived, it’s likely that you’re familiar with the Psalmist’s sentiment that “our soul has had more than enough.” Whatever trial you find yourself in, you probably have had more than enough of it. Enough physical pain. Enough disappointment. Enough waiting. Enough grief. Enough heartbreak. Enough! And it IS enough—when you remember Adam and Eve’s early days in the Garden, you know that a troubled life was not part of the original deal. So we ask for God’s mercy, but often it seems delayed, and we grow weary of waiting for relief to arrive.

Turns out we’re in good company. Sometimes this weariness leads us, like Abraham laying with Hagar, to take matters into our own hands. Other times we fall into despair, like Elijah asking God to take his life before Jezebel does. And on the eve of his death, we see Jesus in the garden, full of anguish and sweating blood, asking God to remove his own trouble. Pleading for rescue from trouble is not an uncommon prayer, nor is it a wrongful one.

So what is the Psalmist’s solution to the weary wait? There’s not one within the verses of Psalm 123. We are to look up and to keep looking up until mercy arrives. Just as the servant does not act on his own understanding, but waits only for the call of his master, so must we wait only for the call of our God. He alone is our rock and our redeemer. He alone is our help. Just as another Psalmist sings “for God alone, O my soul, wait in silence” and while we

wait He encourages us to “pour out [our] heart[s] before him” (Psalm 62).

It’s in this outpouring of our hearts and cries for mercy, that we realize God is providing relief. Not necessarily the rescue that we asked for or expected, but a salve for the soul that comes only from His presence. We find that we are not alone. The intimacy that we enjoy with Him as we experience our deep need for Him becomes the very mercy we seek. We know our trials are not in vain because He draws near to us in comfort and love and begins to work in us, shaping us into His image. We begin to see that it is not the absence of pain and suffering in the Garden that was the true gift, but rather the intimacy that man and woman shared with God as they walked together in unity. And we too have access to this communion with God through Christ.

Set the eyes of your soul on the only one who can save. And in looking at Him, recognize that He is with you always.



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*"Psalm 124 - Snare Broken"*  
Aaron Collier - 2007



# Psalm 124 - A Flight of Fancy

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Steven Rodriguez

"We have escaped like a bird  
from the snare of the fowlers;  
the snare is broken,  
and we have escaped." – Psalm 124.7 (NRSV)

Humans can't fly. This is part of what makes dreams about flying so surreal. It's something that we can't do in real life. There's a reason we call a journey of the imagination a "flight of fancy." Flying is for dreams, and not for reality. When I read Psalm 124, with its image of flying away, all of the escapist impulses in me flare up. Maybe you know the feeling: when you see a loaded inbox, or think about a stressful family gathering, or an unfinished resume, your first impulse is to run, run as far away as you can from your problems.

It's so easy to read this psalm as an escapist fantasy, to ignore our present reality and pretend that everything is alright. It's easy to spiritualize this psalm, to say that physical problems — disease, interpersonal conflict, financial strain — don't matter, because "spiritually," everything is fine. Or, we turn the psalm into a story of what happens when we die. We've got all kinds of problems now, but once we die, our souls will be set free, and we'll leave these old bodies behind in the ultimate escape to heaven.

These are all ways I've been tempted to read this psalm, to try to turn it into a convenient lie we tell ourselves to make ourselves feel better.

But maybe this psalm is saying something different. Maybe this psalm is less about escaping the world and more about receiving the freedom to face the world with boldness. Maybe this psalm is less about escaping reality and more about confronting our ultimate reality.

We don't really know the original context of the psalm. What kind of enemies was the psalmist facing? Were they internal spies? External invaders? The voices inside of his or her own head? We will never know the original context of this psalm, but early on, Christians widened the scope of this psalm. The psalm was no longer just about human enemies and the problems of one person. The camera zoomed out to show the full horizon of our struggle. The "enemy" and the "snare" were seen to be a figure for death. There are other places in scripture where death is called "the last enemy," or where death is described as a gaping maw that tries to swallow us up, like a giant cosmic trap. Ancient Christians heard all of these connections and they read them into this psalm. The psalm was allegorized, but the allegorization was not an escape hatch. It freed them to confront lesser evils without fear.

Our faith is not escapism. It is not a fanciful flight out of reality. It is a confrontation with ultimate realities. Our conflict with death dwarfs every other conflict. Our struggle with our end dwarfs every other struggle. Death is the crisis which Jesus has already entered and fully absorbed. Jesus freely gave himself to be entrapped by the cunning of humans, and so transformed the trap to be the instrument of our salvation. As Ambrose of Milan put it, "The hands of our Lord fixed on the cross were extended like something in flight." Paradoxically, the moment when Jesus was most entangled in sin and death and human hate was the moment when he took flight, conquered sin, death and hate, and liberated us from their grip. Because Jesus Christ stared death in the face and died to conquer death, we have nothing to fear except God. Be-

cause Jesus Christ was entrapped for us, we are no longer under the bondage of anyone or anything.

Absolute freedom is an impossibility, like a circle that is always opening up and never returning to itself. The question presented to us is not “Freedom, yes or no?” but “Which freedom?” The Psalmist has escaped from the trap of enemies into the arms of God. Because we are in the firm, everlasting embrace of God’s covenant, we are free to face every other trap of human hate without fear. “We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers,” and now we are free in the world to play our part in God’s kingdom, no matter what forces of darkness and hate stand in our way.







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*"Psalm 125 - The Dry Bed A Potential Stream"*  
Aaron Collier - 2007

# Psalm 125 - A Word For The Weary

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Carol M. Bechtel

It was the beginning of a Good Friday service and the worship leader had just invited the gathered people of God to “fix our eyes upon Jesus.” It seemed like a logical thing to do on that dark day we call “good.” But the liturgy lost me when it went on to encourage us to “consider him who endured such opposition from sinful people so that we will not grow weary and lose heart.”

*Too late for that, I thought. That horse is out of the barn.* That train has left the station. But before I could begin to berate myself for wallowing in my own weariness in the face of Jesus’ suffering, I experienced one of those grace-filled moments of free-association that sometimes happens in worship. Suddenly, the hand of the LORD came upon me, and brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of...Psalm 125. (You probably thought I was going to say Ezekiel 37—which would have been a good place to land in my condition—but maybe we can talk about God bringing life to dry bones some other day).

Psalm 125 is a word for the weary. As one of the “psalms of ascents” sung and prayed by worshipers on their way up to Jerusalem, it had a very practical function. But the psalm addresses more than just physical exhaustion. There’s a sense in which Psalm 125 speaks to the suffering of *the spiritually exhausted*.

How do we know? Answering that question actually takes a little detective work.

Psalm 125 is a lament, but it is not a typical one. Most laments lead with a heavy list of complaints. Psalm 22, for instance, complains for almost 18 verses before moving on to petition and praise. And most laments are not shy about telling God what's wrong. Again, Psalm 22 offers us great example. In a complaint that's so candid it could almost qualify as an accusation, Psalm 22:1 blurts out its excruciating question: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Things are not so obvious in Psalm 125. We search in vain for any direct complaints. Like frustrated therapists, we listen to the psalmist and find ourselves asking, "Yes, but what's really bothering you? Let's talk about what you're afraid of here..."

The key, I think, is in the psalm's petitions. Verse four pleads: "Do good, O LORD, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts (NRSV; italics mine). Verse five addresses the flip side, by asking God to "lead away with evildoers" those who "in their crookedness act corruptly." (This follows the JPS translation which preserves the verse's prayerful voice). In other words, the psalmist is praying for God to act justly—to reward the righteous and punish the wicked!

As readers, we are left to draw our own conclusions about what the psalmist is complaining about. Yet, it seems pretty safe to conclude that he/she is experiencing some sort of injustice. Whatever the historical specifics, all of us can identify with situations where bad things are happening to good people and good things are happening to bad people. The lack of detail invites us to fill in the blank with whatever injustice looms largest in our lives.

But let's get back to our "therapist" question: *what are you afraid of?* The end of verse three gives us an important clue: "...so that the righteous

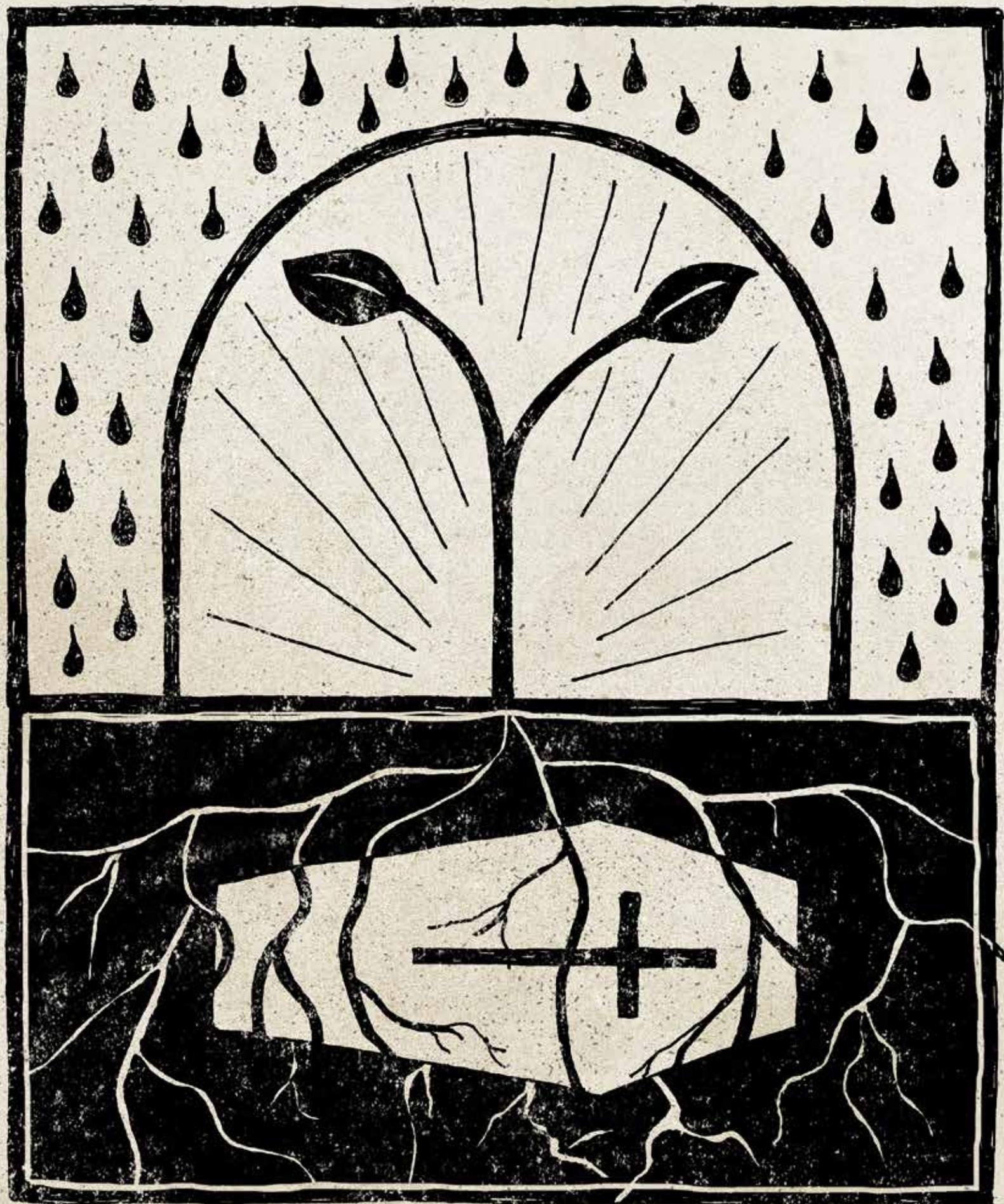
might not stretch out their hands to do wrong.” The psalmist is worried that if God does not act justly, the righteous will give up—that they will lose heart and decide to throw in their lot with the wicked.

*Don't give up! this psalmist is saying. Look around you!* “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people from this time on and forevermore” (v. 2). *Trust God even though the bad guys seem to be winning...*

It was a good word then, and it's a good word now. It's a word for the spiritually weary in a Good Friday world.

Prayer: Help us, faithful God, to feel the strength of your embrace and the power of your promise. Walk beside us on our pilgrimage so that we do not lose heart. Keep our feet firmly in right paths, and help us to know how to sustain the weary with a word.





# Psalm 126

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When the LORD brought back those that returned to Zion,

We were like unto them that dream.

Then was our mouth filled with laughter,

And our tongue with singing:

Then said they among the nations,

the LORD hath done great things for them.

The LORD hath done great things for us,

Whereof we are glad.

Turn again our captivity, O LORD,

As the streams in the South.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for sowing,

Shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

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*“Psalm 126” Pictured Left*  
Michael Van Patter - 2017

# Psalm 126

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Joshua Banner

Gary G. is a man I've come to admire. Gary is a juvenile offender, he committed his crimes in the early 1970's. Gary has been in prison a few years longer than I have been alive. To make a long story short, Gary has some legal reasons to believe that he might have a chance of being released some day. Though a few days ago he told me that his most recent appeal was rejected. I volunteer in the prison and know Gary quite well. I've been astonished by his hope, by the smile he continues to wear when I have sat with him the past three years. Gary has become something of a hero for me. His calm, inquisitive, thoughtful demeanor is comforting, yet I find myself wanting to help Gary experience the pain of his situation. I want to give him permission to weep.

God can be deeply involved in our tears, if we let him.

Have you wept recently over anything? If yes, what are you spilling your tears over? What have you lost? Or consider, how is your fortune? What is the status of your life's work? Said differently: what and who have you been investing in? And how is that going for you? Is your life today what you had expected it to become, or has time and circumstance broken into your life like a pair of bandits to rob your hopes and dreams?

Even if you are not personally experiencing tragedy, one perennial question especially for today is whether or not there is more to weep over now than ever before. Opening ourselves to the tragedy around us can teach us to weep. Social media brings suffering ever closer to our consciousness. Today you need to work pretty hard to keep your head in the

sand to avoid the news of public shootings, violence done by police, violence done to police, corporate fraud and conspiracy, political scandal, political strife, hate crimes, racism, terrorism, war.... And then there's the violence being done to our earth, the abuses of our water, soil, and air.

So, are the times getting worse or better? Is there today more pain and suffering, confusion, struggle and fear than ever before? If you have paused to consider this question, you know this question is more than an intellectual puzzle. If you let it, this question can burn through your heart and down into your guts.

If not your own pain, you can allow tears to flow because of the suffering around you. When you share in other's suffering, you will likely enter a new level of your own suffering with tears of disillusionment: the world is not what we thought it was. The fortunes of the earth have been squandered. The safety and peace of the earth is not secure. Life is precarious. Our world is precarious.

This is the bad news. This is what Jesus has come to save us from. We misunderstand the Gospel when we pretend that suffering does not exist. Instead we surrender to the crucible of faith and face the darkness with open eyes, waiting and watching for the movements of a Lord who will do "great things for us." In posturing our hearts toward such a Deliverer, our tears will become prayer. Lamentation is not giving into despair or grumbling or hard heartedness. In Jesus, lamentation is quite the opposite. We sow our tears in a soil of faith speaking honestly to a God who actually hears us, and somehow all the meaninglessness of suffering becomes *meaningful*.

He desires to restore your fortunes with a steady river of goodness, so much goodness that you will need to ask someone to pinch you. "*I'm so surprised,*" you'll say. "*I had no idea his love was so faithful,*" you'll say. "*This*

*is beyond anything I could have asked for or imagined.*” Salvation will spring up from the ground like a bumper crop of goodness. Your tears will be replaced with laughter, and you’ll emphatically know: he has done it. He has done great things for you.







# Psalm 127

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Trygve Johnson

Working at a college I get a front row seat to talk with young women and men on the way into life. The conversations are often spectacular. The cycle of students flows in and out like the tide. It's constant and turbulent at the same time. One of the things I observe in today's young adults is that they are focused and anxious at the same time. We have created a world of meritocracy for them to inherit – where their identity is determined by how they perform, how they look, how they feel. They are encouraged to strive, to build for themselves, to get up early to toil, and go to bed tired. They often feel dislocated and displaced. The result is a lot of tired people!

When I talk to a student one of the biggest desires I hear is a desire to go home! They miss their family and friends. College is not a replacement for home. Or I will hear a desire and excitement to launch into life and make their own home for themselves. They want to find place and a person to call their own and make a home. The big theme that I hear is a desire for home! What is it about a home that is so important to us?

Maybe it's because at home we know we can take a break from the merry-go-round of meritocracy? At home you don't have to perform to be loved. Home is what gives your identity a context and a history. Home is where you can be forgiven, even as you are corrected. Home is where you can find rest, even as you dream. Home is where you no longer have to strive to be more than yourself, because when you are at home you are always accepted for who you are. Home is where you can sleep and wake

up fresh. Home is a declaration that our humanness cannot be found in escape, detachment, absence of commitment, and undefined freedom.

I think the Psalmist is getting at this when he writes, *“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved.”*

The psalmist reminds us that if we work hard, if we strive, if we build, if we get up early and go to bed late, if we do all of this but forget our *home* – who we are and whose we are – then we do so in vain! The Psalmist wants to lift up our eyes from the anxious toil of the everyday grind, and help us fix our eyes on what is really worth striving towards: a home where God loves you.

It’s true not just for a college student, but also for you. You are called to build, guard, imagine and strive to do more than is often reasonably expected. As you do this work, don’t forget what gives your life its home. It is not the achievements, it’s not your life-strategy, it’s not the money you earn to buy a piece of property. What gives your life a home is the Lord. This is the same Lord of psalm 127. This is the same Lord who comes in the person of Jesus Christ and reconciles the world to himself, so that all can find a home in the world. In the Lord we have a home that gives us a name, a history, a safe place to rest and be after a long days work.

The home we want is one where the Lord builds. Where God’s storied life is charging our life together to be a beloved community. The only way to experience this kind of home is to recognize that God must be the primary builder of your life. This kind of home is more than brick and mortar – the kind of home where we can find and experience the God who can give us rest. Unless the Lord builds the house of our life...the

builders labor in vain. May it be so in the name of the Father, the Son,  
and the Holy Spirit.





# Psalm 128

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Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD,

That walketh in his ways.

For thou shalt eat the labor of thy hands:

Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine,

In the innermost parts of thy house;

Thy children like olive plants,

Round about thy table.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed

That feareth the LORD.

O LORD bless thee out of Zion:

And see thou the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

Yea, see thou thy children's children.

Peace be upon Israel.

# Psalm 128 - A Family Blessing

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Brian Moss

*Read Psalm 128.*

My wife and I have five children.

When we share this fact with some people, they are overjoyed with happiness. Others react differently. They laugh and tell jokes. Upon hearing an announcement at church about the birth of our fifth child, an elderly gentleman came up to me and, with a wry smile, asked, “You know why this keeps happening, right?”

In this day and age, big families have become a kind of joke. The comedian Jim Gaffigan has quipped that having a big family is like “you’re drowning, and then someone hands you a baby.” Other pundits have claimed that big families are simply a method used by religious people to “out-reproduce” the secular world.

As a father of five children, I can tell you that it is, indeed, a lot of work. But it is also a great blessing from God that I will never take for granted.

It is difficult for me to read Psalm 128 without trying to insert myself into the position of the protagonist. I don’t think it is good to try and do unto Scripture in this kind of way. But I don’t think it is wrong for me to say that I want our family to be and become a Psalm 128 kind of family.

There is a progression from Psalm 127, where we read that children are a gift and blessing from the LORD, into Psalm 128, where we discover

that this blessing continues throughout our families and down to our children's children.

The blessing is pronounced upon all who fear and obey the Lord. It is the blessing of those who work according to God's ways. It is the blessing of a faithful wife. It is the blessing of children around the table. It is the blessing of the man who fears the LORD.

As I write, I am well aware that not everyone reading this is married and that not everyone reading this has children. While being married and having children are certainly a specific kind of blessing, Jesus has opened the door for all who would call on His name to become a part of God's family.

As Robert Davidson rightly noted, "The family [of Psalm 128] does not exist in isolation. It is part of a wider community." This community is the same community we read about in Ephesians 2:19-20: "you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."

I understand that there are no guarantees that I will live to see my children's children or that my children will even have children. From conception to this moment, my kids have taught me to trust in God, and they have taught me the fragility of life. We don't know what tomorrow will hold, which is why we need to be a people of gratitude, thankful for every day God gives us. In the midst of it all, I end the day with a simple prayer...

*Thank you, God, for today. Thank you for my family. Thank you for my friends. I don't know what will happen tomorrow, but I thank you for today.*





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*"Psalm 129 - Furrows Not Fallow"*  
Aaron Collier - 2007

# Psalm 129

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Bruce Benedict

“Endurance is not a desperate hanging on but a traveling from strength to strength. There is nothing fatigued or humdrum in Isaiah, nothing flatfooted in Jesus, nothing jejune in Paul. Perseverance is triumphant and alive.”

— Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

Walter Bruggemann, the great Old Testament scholar, begins his commentary on Psalm 129 with, “Psalm 129 will not be familiar to many readers.” It certainly wasn’t to me! Even though the Psalms of Ascents contain many well known psalms there are also some obscure ones in there - I can’t remember the last time someone sang, “Woe to me that I dwell in Meshek, that I live among the tents of Kedar!” from Psalm 120! While I was working through this collection of Psalms for a church project a number of years ago, with the goal of singing a version of each one, there wasn’t a plethora of options when it came to Psalm 129. Eventually I settled on a psalter version from Isaac Watts, “Up From My Youth May Israel Say” which, according to Hymnary.org, last appeared in a hymnal in the mid-19th century. I choose this text for two simple reasons - it was available as a public domain option and I had picked a number of Watts texts already so it made sense in terms of consistency of language. Psalm 129 is usually labeled as a communal prayer of confidence - although that’s not really the tone of the text. It’s a heavy psalm dealing with centuries of persecution and the language of curses, and it reverberates as we move through Holy Week and the journey of Jesus to the cross

(c.f. Isaiah 52:14). While singing a text that finishes with the writer asking God NOT to bless our enemies is typically a hard sell, this psalm facilitates a powerful communal space of lament and grieving in the face of persecution. For Holy Week you might try reading this text with a sung refrain of Bifrost Arts Music “By His Wounds.”

The psalm begins with a statement of oppression that is immediately taken up by the assembly. From this urgent liturgical volley you get a sense of an anthemic rocker - the Ancient Near Eastern equivalent of heavy metal. As Jews began to progress into the masses of the passover crowds they would thrash their heads about, singing “But the Lord is righteous; he has cut me free from the cords of the wicked.”

The first half of the psalm relates two metaphors for oppression - war and agriculture, while the second half replies with the same images, here asking that the enemy find shame in loss, and empty hands in harvesting. This psalm ends with the antithesis of Psalm 134—the blessing of the Lord being withheld. The Psalms of Ascents are rooted in common metaphors of home and country and this one is no different.

The Israelites were a people well acquainted with sorrows, persecutions and foreign occupation — Egyptian slavery, Assyrian conquest, Babylonian exile, Roman occupation. But their belief in the presence and protection of God never wavered, and especially when it involved God’s love and presence in Zion (Jerusalem). Ultimately the Messiah would come to Jerusalem, sustaining both the lashes of the Romans, and the empty harvest of his own people to win victory and fruit for both—to the ends of the world.

Prayer:

Jesus,  
in your obedience  
in your self-sacrifice  
in your tender love for us  
lead us toward holy forgiveness this week.  
Create in our hearts a spring of beatitudes  
that we might bless those who curse us  
and sing your love over all who persecute us.

As we walk towards Good Friday  
would we proclaim your stripes  
as the balm for the nations  
and your resurrection life as the vine that never withers or decays.  
And would your Spirit never be removed from us till the end of the ages.  
Amen.



# Psalm 130

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Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

Lord, hear my voice:

Let thine ears be attentive

To the voice of my supplications.

If thou, O LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,

Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with thee,

That thou mayest be feared.

I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait,

And in his word do I hope.

My soul waiteth for the Lord

More than watchmen wait for the morning;

Yea, more than watchmen for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the LORD;

For with the LORD there is lovingkindness,

And with him is plenteous redemption.

And he will redeem Israel

From all his iniquities.

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*Two versions of Psalm 130 “Bravo (Dangerous Water)” (Top) and “Delta Keep Clear” (Bottom)*  
Joe Cory - 2017

# Psalm 130

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Matt Schneider

In 1523 Martin Luther wrote the hymn *Aus tiefer Not schrei'ich zu dir* (*From deep affliction I cry out to you*). It would be sung later at his own funeral in 1546 as his body made its way back to Wittenberg. The hymn is based on the themes of Psalm 130, a favorite of Luther's—one of several he called Pauline Psalms that reinforced the reclaimed Biblical and Apostolic teachings of the Reformation.

This hymn is most popularly known in the English-speaking world as “From depths of woe.” Like Psalm 130, the hymn highlights the sorrow we feel over our sinfulness, yet it rejoices in the hope we have in Jesus Christ. It's an especially great hymn for the penitential season of Lent, but it's also worthy year-round since its themes are timeless.

As the Psalmist cries out to the Lord, asking Yahweh to attentively hear his voice, begging for mercy, so Luther helps sufferers express,

“From depths of woe I raise to thee the voice of lamentation; Lord, turn a gracious ear to me and hear my supplication.” Haven't you felt this way? Haven't you been at the end of your rope and bottomed out so much that there seemed to be nowhere else to turn but to God?

Yet, how can such desperate derelicts like you and me even stand before the all-glorious God who demands perfect obedience to his commands? We cannot if he simply marks our iniquities—that is to say, our most secret sins, the hidden thoughts of our hearts, the misdeeds in the dark. He knows better than we do even the most intimate information we

ignore about ourselves.

Thankfully our hope lies not in our ability to stand by our own merit. Instead, with the God of Israel, there is forgiveness, steadfast love, and plentiful redemption. Where is this solace to be found if we bring nothing to the equation but original sin and cholesterol? Why should the Lord forgive and forget? It comes by God's grace through the One who is Israel's Seed; the One born of the Spirit; the One who is God Appearing; the One who is the Good and True Shepherd; the One worth waiting for with patience.

Such hope led a deeply afflicted and obscure Augustinian monk to become the leader of an international protest against a misguided medieval Church. The Church through its spiritual inventions was wounding the already sin-sick, telling them they could earn God's favor by their own strength. The great insight this monk had that would change the landscape of worldwide Christianity for centuries to come was that the Church had it wrong. Indeed:

“Therefore my trust is in the Lord,  
And not in mine own merit;  
On Him my soul shall rest, His Word  
Upholds my fainting spirit:  
His promised mercy is my fort,  
My comfort, and my sweet support;  
I wait for it with patience.”

Some of these lines might sound familiar as they echo that other great Luther creation “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” which likewise

proclaims that God is a bulwark—a fortress and support against the work of the Enemy who deceives us into thinking we can cut it on our own. A fort of mercy against the deepest afflictions and sources of pride that lurk deep within and cause us to think, say, and do things that we ultimately regret. And a bulwark against God’s own perfect glory that cannot abide the sight of these sins and sorrows.

Such creatures dare not stand before him by their own might (weakness). Instead, we may take refuge in Jesus Christ, the Rock of our salvation. The world tells us it is shameful to hide, that we must take responsibility. This may be true when it comes to the everyday interpersonal operations, but when it comes to our eternal redemption, we must rest behind the ramparts of the perfect life of Jesus Christ.

Wherever you are in life, whatever might be causing deep woe, however you struggle to do the things you know you ought to do and not to do the things you ought not to do, know that you may cry out to God by the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. He will bend not a condemning ear but a gracious ear to hear you. Like Luther, recognize that you can live alone not by merit, but by mercy. I can think of no better refrain for a funeral.

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*“Like The Watchman Waits For Morning” Pictured right*  
Aaron Collier - 2007







# Psalm 131

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Grace Claus

No, she's not weaned yet, but in this first year, my daughter has grown toward the weaned child of this psalm and has shown me what that quiet trust is like. In her early weeks, to hold her was to feed her. She was desperate, frantic, not even aware that we were eager to help her and satisfy her hunger. She had not yet learned that she could trust us. So she would wail and flail and root, her small self incapable of calm, knowing only her pressing need.

But as she has grown, her disposition has changed. Having seen that we will not neglect her, that we will fulfill her needs, she has come to trust us. And that trust leaves room for a new kind of being together. Now, on a quiet Saturday afternoon at home, she crawls to me from the other side of the room, clambers up into my lap, and plops down, her thumb already finding her mouth. I settle her in and enfold her in my arms. She leans back, tucks her head against my shoulder, and nuzzles me, all the while sucking her thumb contentedly. Eventually, she picks her head back up and looks around the room. To her, I am home base. From my lap, she can observe the world.

And she does—she picks up a nearby book and holds it up to me, wanting to read. She points at the window, and together we go to it and look out, watching the cars pass. Or she gazes off, calm, quiet, in need of nothing, content in my arms.

My lap also gives her courage. Recently, on a day off, we went to a

nearby indoor play area. The place was buzzing with children. My daughter, not yet walking, was the youngest child there. She held her own for a while, hanging on and waddling around the low edge of the play structure as bigger kids scampered around her. I sat a few yards away, watching. Eventually, though, the chaos got the better of her, and she crawled over and climbed into my lap. With her thumb in her mouth, she watched the scene, pointing at this girl or that boy. From the safety of my arms, she was able to encounter the world around her, disorienting as it was, without fear.

That is the psalmist. He has come to trust the Lord and so can sit, calm, quiet, in need of nothing, content in the Lord's arms. The psalmist doesn't fret. His needs are met or will be, so he's free from preoccupation with those needs and free from the anxiety of not knowing. He knows: the Lord has proven himself trustworthy, so the psalmist can rest.

Now so familiar with the weight of a small child in my lap, I picture myself in my daughter's place. Why, when I am anxious and overwhelmed, do I try to sort it out myself, aware of my aloneness as I lie awake? Why do I not crawl into my Father's lap, certain of his sure presence and his capability to make things right, trusting in him because he's shown himself to be so? Rather than occupying myself with things beyond my ken, things that I as a creature have no possibility of solving on my own, I want to learn to crawl to the one whose presence is unshakeable, and encounter the world from his arms. From my perch there, I can go forth calmly and confidently, trusting and hoping in him.

# Psalm 132

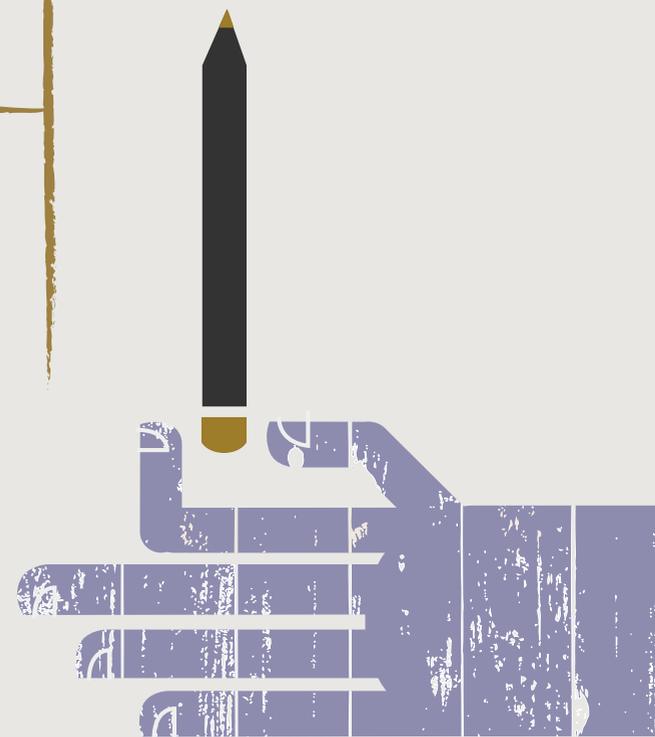
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O LORD, remember for David  
All his affliction;  
How he swore unto the LORD,  
And vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob:  
Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,  
Nor go up into my bed;  
I will not give sleep to mine eyes,  
Or slumber to mine eyelids;  
Until I find out a place for the LORD,  
A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob.  
Lo, we heard of it in Ephrathah:  
We found it in the field of the wood.  
We will go into his tabernacles;  
We will worship at his footstool.  
Arise, O LORD, into thy resting-place;  
Thou, and the ark of thy strength.  
Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness;  
And let thy saints shout for joy.  
For thy servant David's sake  
Turn not away the face of thine anointed.  
The LORD hath sworn unto David in truth;  
He will not turn from it:

Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.  
If thy children will keep my covenant  
And my testimony that I shall teach them,  
Their children also shall sit upon thy throne  
for evermore.  
For the LORD hath chosen Zion;  
He hath desired it for his habitation.  
This is my resting-place for ever:  
Here will I dwell; for I have desired it.  
I will abundantly bless her provision:  
I will satisfy her poor with bread.  
Her priests also will I clothe with salvation;  
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.  
There will I make the horn of David to bud:  
I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.  
His enemies will I clothe with shame;  
But upon himself shall his crown flourish.

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*“Psalm 132” Pictured Right*  
Blake Johnson - 2017



# Psalm 132

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Joel Limpic

As faithful Jewish pilgrims would pack their bags three times a year and head to Jerusalem, the Psalms of Ascents were the designated playlist and soundtrack for the trip. Throughout the journey, they would sing and work their way through this broad and beautiful collection of songs. This song would take them on a walk down memory lane as it would recall two key parts of their nation's story: David's relentless passion for God and God's lavish promise to David.

## **David's Passion For God**

This psalm begins with a prayer asking God to remember David's sustained effort to see a house of worship established for God's people. Essential to his work was bringing the Ark of the Covenant (aka "God's footstool") back to Jerusalem. If you remember the story in 1 Samuel 4, the ark had been tragically captured by the Philistines. Even after a miraculous recovery, the ark remained for years in a place called Kiriath-jearim about 9 miles outside of Jerusalem. The ark represented God's presence, and David refused to allow any distance to remain between him and God's presence. Through much sacrifice, he was able to bring the ark back to the tabernacle in Jerusalem for the joy of God's people. Twice in this psalm God is referred to as the Mighty One of Jacob, hinting back to their fighting forefather who wrestled all night for a blessing from God (Genesis 32). David was joining Jacob in a similar wrestling match, but in

his case, he was struggling with all his might to find a place for God's house of worship. What a beautiful picture David gives us of zeal and tenacity and his "one thing" heart that we see in Psalm 27:4! Oh, that we would imagine David in his willingness to pay any price to experience nearness to his God along with the people of God.

### **God's Promise To David**

David was not met with silence. In verse 11, we overhear God's promise to David which was far better than anything David could have asked or imagined... God swears that one of David's own descendants will establish the exact thing he was longing for: God's very presence in their midst. This king wouldn't be a temporary ruler, but rather one who would sit upon an eternal throne. In the promises that unfold throughout the rest of the psalm, we see a parallel but far greater resolve shown by God Himself for Zion and completing the work He started there.

Nothing could stand in God's way... Not even the exile of God's people to Babylon or the destruction of the temple. He would powerfully fulfill this promise hundreds of years later through sending His very own Son from the line of David. Like David, Jesus was zealous for the house of God. Unlike David, Jesus laid down His very own life to see God's promise come to pass. No longer was Jerusalem the epicenter for this temple, but rather the individual lives of His people (1 Peter 2:5). Through Jesus we no longer need to go to Jerusalem to worship, but are each filled with the Spirit of God as His dwelling place! Wherever God's people are, there is a place for worship. Consider and be in wonder at the faithfulness of God to fulfill every promise in this psalm through His Son.

Fellow pilgrim, you are not alone or forgotten! When your feet are tired and songs are weak, allow the truths found in Psalm 132 to wash over you and remind you of the God who refused to allow any distance to keep you from Himself. The work that He started is the work He will complete. May His faithfulness and presence fill your bones and legs with courage and strength for the journey ahead...





# Psalm 133

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Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
For brethren to dwell together in unity!  
It is like the precious oil upon the head,  
That ran down upon the beard,  
Even Aaron's beard;  
That came down upon the skirt of his garments;  
Like the dew of Hermon,  
That cometh down upon the mountains of Zion:  
For there the LORD commanded the blessing,  
Even life for evermore.

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*"Psalm 133" Pictured Left*  
Kyle Ragsdale - 2017

# Psalm 133

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Elliott Grudem

Psalm 133 celebrates how good and pleasant it is when God's people get along. (“Brothers” in verse one is a bit of a technical term that refers to all God's people).

And yet, everything from bickering on social media to church member meetings indicate it's tough for God's people to get along. Add to that the general loneliness that is felt by most adults over 30—that membership in a church doesn't automatically fix—and Psalm 133 seems to hold out an ideal that God's people often miss.

The word “good” in verse one and “commanded” in verse three gives an indication why we don't always experience the blessings of getting along. It causes us to think back to creation, when God spoke things into existence that he himself called good. In Eden things were as they were supposed to be. Adam and Eve dwelled in unity. Everything was good and pleasant. Then they brought sin into their perfect world and everything was disrupted. Cain and Abel—brothers—didn't dwell in unity. Things were no longer the way they were supposed to be and they haven't been since.

So, when God's people don't get along, it isn't how it's supposed to be. Sin is the reason; God's ideal isn't experienced. It isn't good and pleasant.

But, when God's people do “dwell in unity” it is “good and pleasant.” David gives us two pictures of how good and pleasant it is. The pictures of oil and dew are pictures of abundant, overwhelming gifts of grace,

both flowing down from God above to his people below. They are pictures of God's lavish generosity. Dwelling in unity is one of the many good things God gives his people.

Psalm 133 encourages us to seek out and enjoy the blessings of dwelling in unity with others.

When we experience strife in our relationships or feel the sting of loneliness in the lack of relationships, Psalm 133 encourages us to fight against the temptation to give into cynicism or apathy and instead recognize things aren't as God designed them to be. The Psalm encourages us to realize God made us for something more. Through the Psalm, God encourages us to ask him for something better. He encourages us to engage with others, all the while praying he will bring his future promised blessing into our present relationships.

Psalm 133 encourages us to trust that God himself—the one who initiated a relationship with us that will last forever—takes great pleasure letting us experience how good and pleasant it is to dwell in unity with others.





# Psalm 134

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Anna Gabhart

Breathe. Take a deep breath.

I imagine for the weary traveler that the journey was long. The climb up the hill to Jerusalem steep. Dusty clothes, tired feet, a dry and scratchy throat from crying out to the Lord.

And I imagine for the weary traveler that when the journey became long and the nights grew dark there were thoughts of turning around. Going back home to the cooking, and harvesting, and familiar laborings of life. I imagine thoughts of doubt and questions creeping into the travelers mind when the enemy scoffed and threats appeared. But I also imagine all of the voices that would rise up from all sides of the traveler in the midst of the dangers and the doubts and the temptation to return home. Voices reminding all of the travelers where they have been, where they are going, and who has gone before them. Voices rising up and saying:

“Come, bless the Lord, all you  
servants of the Lord,  
who stand by night in the house of  
the Lord!  
Lift up your hands to the holy place,  
and bless the Lord.  
May the Lord, maker of heaven and  
earth,  
bless you from Zion.”

So breathe. Take a deep breath.

Because for the weary traveler the journey is at an end. And it ends with open arms.

Psalm 134 is the last of the Psalms of Ascents. The shortest of the collection. It is a praise, a blessing, and a benediction that embodies the purpose of the pilgrim's journey—to praise the Lord and to receive blessing from the Lord. The entire journey of the traveler, from crying out in distress in Psalm 120, to looking up to the heavens for mercy in Psalm 123, to calming and quieting the soul in Psalm 131—it all points towards worship and being in the presence of our Lord. To be blessed by the one who is the source of all blessings.

So come and praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord. And as the sun sets and the shadows fall, stand up and lift your hands to the Lord. For he comforts you in the midst of your doubt and he blesses you in your weakness. No longer must you watch for morning; he is with you always; he has never left your side. For the Lord is the maker, the creator, the sustainer, of all things in heaven and on earth and He blesses you.

Find rest, you weary traveler, as we journey together to the cross and the resurrection. *And may the Lord, maker of heaven and earth bless you from Zion.*



## Contributing artists:

Sayde Anderson

**“Psalm 128”** block print on canvas

Aaron Collier

Psalm 120, - **“Patience”** oil on canvas

Psalm 123 - **“Help Higher Than The Hills”** oil on canvas

Psalm 124 - **“Snare Broken”** oil on canvas

Psalm 125 - **“The Dry Bed A Potential Stream”** oil on canvas

Psalm 129 - **“Furrows Not Fallow”** oil on canvas

Psalm 130 - **“Like The Watchman Waits For Morning”** oil on canvas

Psalm 133 - **“Like The Dew Of Hermon”** oil on canvas

Psalm 134 - **“Grounded, Leaping”** oil on canvas

**“Songs of Ascent”** oil on canvas

Mitchell Conrad

Psalm 122 - **“Shalom Within Your Walls”** photography

Joe Cory

Psalm 130 - **“Delta Keep Clear”** oil on canvas

Psalm 130 - **“Bravo (Dangerous Water)”** mixed media

Blake Johnson

Psalm 132 - **“Temple”** digital

Tyler Meuninck

Psalm 127 - **“Good News”** mixed media

Joseph Novak

**“Psalm 121”** digital

Hope Olson

**“Psalm 131”** - oil on canvas

Kyle Ragsdale

Psalm 133 - **“Aaron’s Beard”** oil on canvas

Michael VanPatter

**“Psalm 126”** digital



## Further Reading:

Some of our favorite further up, further in resources for exploring the Psalms of Ascents.

Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. *The Journey Isn't Over: The Pilgrim Psalms for Life's Challenges and Joys*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 1993.

Peterson, Eugene H. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980.

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