



Heart Songs: Week Three | Entering God's Sanctuary

Reading Plan:

There are many times in our walk with the Lord when we may be acting within our faith but aren't investing ourselves wholeheartedly in it. Sometimes we need a little guidance to bring us back into a fully invested personal relationship with God. In this five-day reading plan, Lenya Heitzig guides us through Psalm 84 and shows us how to apply it to our own faith no matter the season of life we're in.

Day 1: Long for God

Most people have never heard of the evangelist A.B. Earle. Yet over a fifty-year period in the 1800s, he traveled 325,000 miles across America, preached 19,780 times, and witnessed 150,000 conversions to Jesus Christ. Earle trekked from city to city, uniting local churches into powerful crusade services.

To the surprise of many, Earle wasn't a great preacher. In fact, his skills were average, his voice was plain, his facial expressions were unattractive, and his sermons were dated. His speaking wasn't highly emotional, plus his grammar and rhetoric were faulty.

But when Earle spoke, God's presence and power gripped his listeners. The reality of the Holy Spirit seemed to descend. After his services, people were often heard praying at midnight in the streets and houses.



Earle had discovered the secret to a powerful ministry. While he began to preach in 1830 at the age of eighteen, thirty years later in 1860, he began to feel an inexpressible longing for the fullness of Christ. As he wrote, "I loved the ministry, but felt inward unrest. Seasons of joy would be followed by doubt. In this state I was exposed to severe attacks of the enemy." Like the psalmist in today's verses, Earle spent time in prayer and longed to be in God's presence. Because of his time spent in God's presence, Earle had a remarkable impact on his world (adapted from Robert J. Morgan, *From This Verse* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998]).

During the next several days, take time to study the key principles from the psalmist and apply them to your own relationship with Jesus.

Read the verses below and answer the following questions:

"How lovely is Your tabernacle,
O LORD of hosts!
My soul longs, yes, even faints
For the courts of the LORD;
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (Psalm 84:1-2).

Practical Observation

1. How is the tabernacle described, and who resides in it?
2. What title did the psalmist give Him? Why is this important to reflect on?
God's Throne. One Hebrew name for God is Jehovah-Sabaoth, which is translated to the Lord of Hosts. This name refers to God the Savior who is surrounded by His heavenly hosts of power. "I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left" (1 Kings 22:19).
3. What did the psalmist say about his soul? What about his heart and flesh? What emotions do you think he was trying to convey here?
God's Presence. To cry means to shout aloud for joy or triumphantly rejoice. Nothing satisfies our longing for the living God but intimate fellowship with Him. Our hearts spontaneously erupt with joy when we enter His presence. "Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you" (Isaiah 12:6, NIV).

Personal Application

- a. The psalmist's whole being—soul, heart, and flesh—longed for the privilege of being in the presence of the living God. What is it that you long for?



- b. In what specific ways do your heart (mind, will, and emotions) and flesh (physical body) cry out for the living God?
1. Heart (example: peace, forgiveness)
 2. Flesh (example: rest in His presence, expressive praise)

God's Command. *Our flesh seldom desires anything good, "for I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells" (Romans 7:18). But sometimes our weary flesh assists our hearts by demanding physical rest and rejuvenation. God commands us to observe a Sabbath—one day set aside for reflection and worship—to cry out for all our needs.*

In God's house or tabernacle, everyone is welcomed and can find a place of refuge, friendship, and tolerance. As the psalmist celebrated loveliness and cried out for the Lord's company, we too can look to His beauty and draw near to Him. Only by going to God in praise, worship, and spending time among His people can we find peace, recovery, and healing.

Verses:

Psalm 84:1-2

Day 2: Sing His Praises

Corrie ten Boom told a story about an old monk named Brother Don. Each year on Christmas Eve, he sang a Christmas song for his brothers in the monastery and for visitors from the village who attended the special services. This monk had a very ugly voice, but he loved the Lord and sang from his heart. One year the director of the cloister said, "I'm sorry, Brother Don, we will not need you this Christmas. We have a new monk with a beautiful voice."

The new monk sang beautifully, and everyone was happy. That night an angel came to the superior and said, "Why didn't you have a Christmas Eve song?"

The superior was very surprised. "Didn't you hear the beautiful song?" he said.

Sadly, the angel shook his head and said, "It may have been inspiring to you, but we didn't hear it in heaven."

Then Corrie ten Boom would explain, "You see, the old monk with the raspy voice had a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, while the young monk sang for his own benefit, not for that of the Lord" (adapted from Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000]).

In today's verses, the psalmist celebrated the believer's ability to enter God's presence through praise and singing. Maybe you've been in a service where you heard someone singing off key. Whether your voice sounds off tune like Brother Don or you have a natural ability, the key is your personal relationship with Jesus and the music which dwells in your heart.



Read the verses below and answer the following questions:

"Even the sparrow has found a home,
And the swallow a nest for herself,
Where she may lay her young—
Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in Your house;
They will still be praising You. *Selah*" (Psalm 84:3-4).

Practical Observation

1. The psalmist named two birds. Who are they, and what have they found?
2. Why do you think the psalmist contemplated these birds?
Set Mind on God. *God created birds to soar through the air and nest in the heights. Birds instantly draw our attention to things above, to life beyond ourselves and our earthly surroundings. "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2).*
3. How do you know that the psalmist had a personal relationship with the Lord of Hosts? Do you refer to God as your King, your God? Why or why not?
4. Explain who is blessed and how they express their joy.

Celebration to God. *The phrase "still be praising" means a continuous, lifelong celebration of God's glory. Saints who have unbroken fellowship with the Lord have unhindered praises. "Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; and let those who love Your salvation say continually, 'Let God be magnified!'" (Psalm 70:4).*

Personal Application

- a. Our thoughts can either be drawn toward heaven or dragged down to earth. Where do most of your thoughts lie? What can you do today to direct your thoughts toward God?
- b. Using your imagination, build a word altar to commemorate what you are currently experiencing in your relationship with your King and your God (for example: love, praise, adoration, thanksgiving, obedience, honor, help, humility).



- c. Those who dwell with God continually praise Him. Write your own personal prayer of praise.

Like the psalmist, on earth let's be devoted to our sacred duty of serving our living God and singing His praises. In heaven, we will certainly dwell eternally in His presence and live in perpetual praise.

Verses:

Psalm 84:3-4

Day 3: Stay the Course

When Dennis Conner skippered *Stars and Stripes* to victory over Australia in 1987, he recaptured the America's Cup. The press lionized Dennis, but success came from the combined efforts of the crew. The sixty-five-foot craft is not made for rough seas, has no engine, and is not a good sea boat. The America's Cup poses the toughest possible test for the boat and crew: only eleven of the sixteen men needed can sail her. Each crew member fills at least two or three positions.

The ten thousand moves that go into a race are orchestrated in sequence to achieve maximum speed. Muscle, finesse, or acrobatics are demanded for each task. And the captain is the person who knows what everybody is doing.

To sail the *Stars and Stripes* contains many parallels to the church. God designed the church to sail in rough seas, without regard for danger. The church has always been undermanned, with too few workers and too little money. Christians need to serve knowledgeably as God has gifted them, and anywhere in an emergency. And even when the work is hard, dangerous, or costly, they must remain steadfast in their work. Believers must listen to directions from their leaders so they can continue winning others to Christ (adapted from Virgil Hurley, *Speaker's Sourcebook of New Illustrations* [Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995]).

In today's verses, the psalmist reflected on the weary pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem and how the Lord provided them the comfort and strength to stay the course. The Valley of Baca or Valley of Weeping is a metaphor for the various difficulties that a person might face during the pilgrimage. Though they pass through a barren place, they fear no evil, knowing that the Lord supplies all their needs. Even in the sandy desert, He provides pools of water so they can continue the journey with renewed strength and meet with the God of Israel in Zion. As they near the temple, the challenges of the journey become more tolerable because they have almost arrived at their destination and can experience the joy of being in the Lord's temple.

Like these pilgrims, we must remain steadfast and follow the Lord each day of our faith journey. No matter where we are in the pilgrimage of following Jesus, we need to maintain our personal relationship with Him, looking for Him to supply our needs as He leads us to our destination.



Read the verses below and answer the following questions:

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
They make it a spring;
The rain also covers it with pools.
They go from strength to strength;
Each one appears before God in Zion" (Psalm 84:5-7).

Practical Observation

1. In yesterday's lesson, the psalmist spoke of the blessedness of those who dwell in God's house. Who is blessed in today's lesson?
2. What is his heart set on?
Pilgrimage. *Jews were required to make a pilgrimage or journey to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate special feasts. As they traveled, they set their hearts on their spiritual home, Zion. As "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13), we also should set our hearts on our spiritual home –heaven.*
3. Explain where their journey took them and what occurred there.
Prepared. *To guard against thirst, the pilgrims dug pits in the soil to hold rainwater. God was faithful to fill the holes. In the same way, we must be prepared to receive the grace of God that is always sufficient for us. "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9).*
4. What did the pilgrims experience by walking in God's power and presence? What was their ultimate reward?

Personal Application

- a. Are you currently experiencing, or have you ever experienced, an arid valley or a valley of weeping? Journal about your valley. Who is (was) involved and what are (were) the circumstances? What did God teach you during that time?
- b. Everyone, at one time or another, goes through valleys of hardship or weeping. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved." How can we turn our hardship into refreshment?

Verses:



Psalm 84:5-7

Day 4: Determine to Dwell

As a young boy, John Paton felt the impact of his father's deeply ingrained habits of daily devotions. Each day he heard his father praying in the next room of the little cottage where he lived. Even as a boy of six, Paton noticed the bright countenance which perpetually appeared on his father's face.

As an adult, Paton explained that while the outside world might not understand the light on his father's face, "as children we knew it reflected the Divine Presence in his life."

He said, "Never in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is nearer, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that humble cottage roof of thatch and oaken wattles. My father walked with God; why may not I?"

Years later as a missionary in the South Pacific, John Paton experienced grave difficulties and breathtaking dangers. "Without the abiding consciousness of the presence and power of my Lord and Savior," he wrote, "nothing in the world could have preserved me from losing my reason and perishing miserably. It is the sober truth that I had my nearest and most intimate glimpses of the presence of my Lord in those dread moments when musket, club, or spear was being leveled at my life" (adapted from Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000]). Paton knew firsthand the truth of the psalmist who was determined to dwell in God's presence. The reality of these verses from Psalms was modeled in his father's life.

Read the verses below and answer the following questions:

"O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
Give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*
O God, behold our shield,
And look upon the face of Your anointed.

"For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:8-10).

Practical Observation

1. What two requests did the psalmist make? What additional name did he give to God?



Always Pray. Prayer is the pilgrim's source of strength. No matter where we are, what we're doing, or who we're with, we can always pray. The God of Jacob, who mercifully gave Jacob all things when he deserved absolutely nothing (see Genesis 25-27), also hears our prayers. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

2. What else did he desire of God? Who was God asked to look upon?

Always Protects. The psalmist wanted God to behold or consider that he, an anointed Levite, humbly and wholeheartedly acknowledged God as his shield and protector. Jesus, God's Anointed, "is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints" (Proverbs 2:7-8).

3. In your own words, describe the psalmist's feelings about dwelling with God.

Personal Application

- a. The psalmist called God "our shield." Specifically, how has Jesus shielded you from worry, fear, or anger?
- b. We learn that it's better to be a doorkeeper in God's house than among the wicked. Doorkeepers, or gatekeepers, guarded the thresholds to many locations. Believers serve as doorkeepers at the threshold of God's temple—our bodies. "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?" (1 Corinthians 3:16, NIV). What do you need to guard against crossing the threshold of your eyes, ears, and tongue?
- c. We also serve as guards at the entrances to our homes. In what ways can you guard the entrance to your home against the influences of the world?

Verses:

Psalm 84:8-10

Day 5: Reap the Blessings

Someone once asked evangelist Dwight Moody, "How do you manage to remain so intimate in your relationship with Christ?"

He replied, "I have come to Him as the best friend I have ever found, and I can trust Him in that relationship. I have believed He is Savior; I have believed He is God; I have believed His atonement on the cross is mine, and I have come to Him and submitted myself on my knees, surrendered everything to Him, and gotten up and stood by His side as my friend, and there isn't any problem in my life, there isn't any uncertainty in my work but I turn and speak to Him as naturally as to someone in the same room, and I have done it these years because I can trust Jesus" (adapted from Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000]).



Moody had learned the secret of surrendering everything into the hands of God to be able to reap the blessings. In today's verses, the psalmist gave the Lord God his life, knowing that through living a consistent, upright life, God would allow His grace to fill his life.

Read the verses below and answer the following questions:

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good thing will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly.

"O LORD of hosts,
Blessed is the man who trusts in You!" (Psalm 84:11-12).

Practical Observation

1. How is the Lord God described?
God's Holiness. *The brilliance of God's holiness shines a light on and exposes our sins. The crimson blood of Christ covers us as a protective shield, allowing God's gaze to behold us through Jesus' righteousness. "But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2).*
2. Explain what the Lord will give and to whom He'll give it.
3. Psalm 15:2-3 says, "He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend." What attributes do you see in that passage of those who walk uprightly?
4. What causes a person to be blessed?

Personal Application

- a. Think back on your answers to question 3. Are you walking uprightly? If not, what areas of your life do you need to change?
- b. We learned today that God does not withhold any good thing from His children who walk uprightly. What blessings, spiritual or other, have you received from living in integrity and truth?
- c. Like the sun, God's holiness radiates over all the earth, exposing the sin of mankind. If you are finishing this lesson during the day, step outside, close your eyes, and let the sun shine on you. If you are finishing this lesson at night, get a flashlight or a small lamp. Turn off all the lights, close your eyes, and shine the light on yourself. Take a few minutes to open your heart and let God's holiness shine in you. Take time to think about what He revealed to you.



Shortly after the death of their daughter Robin, Roy Rogers and his wife, Dale Evans, met a pale little boy who stuck out his hand and said, "Howdy, pahtnah!" Dale and Roy adopted him and in honor of his hair named him Sandy. He was bright-eyed and good-natured and was a blessing for the couple. During a Billy Graham Crusade, Sandy became a Christian.

At seventeen, he enlisted in the army "to prove myself." Sandy worked hard and won respect. He was sent to Germany and then volunteered for Vietnam. One day as Dale Evans returned from a trip, she was met at the airport. "It's Sandy, Mom. He's dead." Sandy had returned from twenty-six days of maneuvers. His buddies had taken him out for the night and Sandy, who couldn't tolerate alcohol, had given in. They fed him hard liquor until he collapsed. The next morning, he was found dead in his bunk.

Drawing strength from Scripture, Dale Evans survived the sorrow. "Tragedy in a Christian's life is a refiner," she wrote. "God has not promised an easy way, but peace at the center of the hard way" (adapted from Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations & Quotes* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000]). For the believer, the blessings from God are many, but most important are peace of God's presence in us on earth, and ultimately our union with Him eternally.

Like the psalmist, even in the darkest valley, on the longest journey, let your heart long for the living God. Determine in your heart to dwell with Him now and for eternity. You can expect to reap blessings. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

Verses:

Psalm 84:11-12

