

CORE COMPETENCIES

Core Beliefs

- Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- Personal God
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- Stewardship

Core Practices

- Worship
- Prayer
- Bible Study
- Single-Mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving Away My Time
- Giving Away My Money
- Giving Away My Faith
- Giving Away My Life

Core Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness/Goodness

• Faithfulness

"I am faithful to fulfill God's will for my life."

- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope
- Humility

Life is a journey. I like that picture a lot, because it helps me to realize that I am in process, not arriving. I will continue on this journey until I see Jesus face to face. But in meantime, I'm on a journey towards Him. But within the bigger journey of life, there are many other smaller journeys that we have the opportunity to take. One of those is a journey to be with God. This journey is one that we can take each day, if we choose—in both a specific time and place as well as throughout the course of our day. This week I pray that you will sense God's invitation to this journey—and that God will draw you in to take a journey to His presence through this Psalm each day.

On the journey,

Richard Gotthardt, Pastor of Spiritual Formation

Monday

Begin your time today by sitting in silence for a few moments.

Make a list of any distractions that you may have. In prayer, ask God to help you hear the words He has for you today.

Read Psalm 84.

This psalm is a song of ascent that Old Testament believers would have sung on their journey to Jerusalem where they would worship in the temple.

The Psalm was of the sons of Korah. Read 1 Chronicles 9:19. What responsibility did the sons of Korah have in the temple?

In Old Testament times, the temple was the place where the Spirit of God dwelled. The sons of Korah were privileged because they were able to spend their lives near the presence of God since they served as gatekeepers for the temple. The sons of Korah also wrote many other Psalms. Choose one other Psalm of Korah and read it: Psalms 42-49; 85; 87; 88.

Old Testament believers regularly traveled to worship at the temple—particularly for several different festivals each year. What does this Psalm tell us about their expectations for being in the presence of God at the temple?

In the Old Testament God chose to dwell among His people within the temple; however, after Jesus life and death on the cross, God now dwells within the life of the believer through the presence of the Holy Spirit. We no longer have to go to the temple of God to experience His presence, so this Psalm has different meaning and application for our lives today.

Read Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-22. How has God called us to set our hearts on pilgrimage?

Close your time in prayer thanking God for His presence in your life.

Tuesday

Today we will focus on the expectation of the Old Testament believer as they traveled to the temple to worship God. What expectations do you have as you enter into your time with God today?

Read Psalm 84. Slowly reread verses 1-4 again.

What names of God are listed in these verses? Next to each of these names write out what this name shows us about God's character.

What does verse 2 tell us about the longings of the believer for the presence of God?

Does this description accurately describe your experience of God's presence? When have you felt like this before?

What names of God are listed in these verses? Next to each of these names write out what this name shows us about God's character.

What does verse 2 tell us about the longings of the believer for the presence of God?

Read verse 4. Note that the one who is blessed is the one who dwells in God's house, not just visits. Although the Old Testament believers could not live in the presence of God in the temple, they could choose to worship God on an ongoing basis, "dwelling" in His presence everyday. It was their choice whether their spiritual life was merely a visit of one who comes to the temple, leaving unchanged, or one who was deeply changed in the presence of God and truly "dwelt" in His presence. Would you consider yourself to be a visitor to the presence of God these days or more like one who dwells there? What makes you say that?

Close your time today by memorizing Psalm 84:1-4. As you think through these words, pray them back to God expressing your expectations of joy in His presence.

Wednesday

Although we no longer physically travel to the temple to experience the presence of God, we must be intentional about setting aside distractions and sin so that we can come into the presence of God unhindered. Today we will focus on the journey that was made to the temple and understand the application for our own "journey" into God's presence.

Begin your time by expressing your desire to truly enter into God's presence today.

Read Psalm 84 in its entirety and then reread verses 5-7.

Where did the strength come from to journey into God's presence? Express to God your reliance on His strength to truly set aside distraction and enter into His presence.

Verse 5 tells us that their hearts were set on pilgrimage. In your life, where do you find evidence of your heart's desire of a pilgrimage (a journey) towards God's presence?

The Valley of Baca was an arid section of land on the way to Jerusalem, known as the place of weeping or suffering. It is used as a metaphor to describe how the believer passing through this place made it a place of springs because of their joy in the anticipation of God.

Describe a time in your life that was a "valley of Baca." How did your assurance of God's strength and presence help make this time a "place of springs?"

End your time today by memorizing verse 5-7.

Pray that God would help you to be one whose heart is set on pilgrimage.

Thursday

Today we will focus on the joy that we experience in God's presence. Begin your time asking God to give you great joy in His presence today.

Read Psalm 84; now reread verses 8-12.

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. (vs. 10) What could help you to make this declaration more fully and truthfully about your own life?

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of the wicked (vs. 10).

At times, we have all chosen to "dwell in the tents of the wicked" instead of God's presence. Think of specific examples of this in your life—what distracted you from the joy of God's presence and lured you towards the "tents of the wicked?"

Verse 11 tells us about God, using the metaphor of a sun and shield. What does this metaphor tell you about God? What are some things that God has shielded you from?

Read verse 12 as a prayer of assurance.

Close your time today by memorizing verses 8-12.

Friday

Begin your time by asking God to make this Psalm a declaration of your heart regarding His presence in your life.

Review your memorization of Psalm 84.

Read Psalm 84 again. After reading it, write the Psalm in your own words.

*Ex. The place where you dwell is indescribably perfect,
Oh God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things!
Everything in me intensely craves your nearness.
My heart and my flesh long for you, the living God.*

End your time by reading your paraphrase of Psalm 84 as the declaration of your desire to live in God's presence.