

CORE COMPETENCIES

Core Beliefs

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

Core Practices

- **Worship**
"I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me."

- 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
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope
- Humility

There's nothing like living in a desert, especially in the summertime, is there? It's not just that it's really hot—though of course, it's really, really hot. One thing I notice is how quickly things dry out—like the ground. When I looked at the ground around a large tree in our yard, I saw just how parched and cracked it had become. The tree was showing signs of distress, too. What was needed was a nice, long drink of water. When we watered it long and deeply, I could almost hear the ground breathe huge sigh of relief. And that's the picture of our soul that is offered in this week's Psalm. Dry and weary land in need of a nice long drink. I pray that as you enter God's Word this week and meet with Him, it will be a long, cool drink for your soul. Let God's Word soak in—it's just what we need.

In Him,

Richard Gotthardt, Pastor of Spiritual Formation

Monday

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

Examine yourself and answer the following question. What do I currently desire or long after?

Read Psalm 42

This Psalm opens with an expression of intense desire and longing for God's presence. Reread Psalm 42:1-2.

Think of a time when you were intensely hungry or thirsty. Describe your thoughts or emotions at that time.

Think of a time when you longed deeply for God's presence. Describe your thoughts and emotions during that experience.

God has placed within us a deep desire for His presence; a longing that can only be filled by encountering God. Often we don't experience this desire because we are distracted by our circumstances, possessions, relationships etc.

On a scale of 1-10 (1=low/10=high) how would you rate your desire for God currently?

What is distracting you from your desire for God?

Psalm 42 says that we are to long for God like we long for water when we are thirsty. Close your time today by praying verses 1-2.

Tuesday

Begin today in prayer. Ask God to make His Word alive in both your mind and heart.

Read Psalm 42. Reread verses 3, 7, 9-10. What emotions or thoughts is the Psalmist expressing in these verses?

Verse 7 paints a picture of someone drowning, desperately longing to get out from underneath the situation they are in. The Psalmist attributes these overtaking waves to the hand of God. Describe a time in which you felt God had allowed a situation to occur in which you felt desperate for relief.

How did you relate to God during this time?

How did you seek relief from your situation?

Read verse 8. After expressing desperation in the drowning waves, the Psalmist acknowledges God's care both day and night over his life.

Think back to the time you described earlier. How did God care for you in this time of desperation?

Close your time by thanking God for His care.

Wednesday

Begin your time in a few moments of silence. Make a list of any tasks or situations that are distracting you. Set this list aside and ask God to help you focus on His Word this morning.

Read Psalm 42. Reread verses 3, 9-10. Besides feeling internal desperation for God, the Psalmist also feels external oppression from his enemies.

How were his enemies causing him discouragement?

The Psalmist had trusted in God with His life and now God didn't seem to be coming through for him. To make things worse, his enemies were taunting him, asking him, "Where is your God?"

Describe a time when you felt that people were questioning your faith in God or in His work in your life. How did this make you feel towards God? Yourself? Others?

Read John 10:10. Our greatest enemy is Satan, the thief who comes only to steal, kill and destroy. Think back to the situation you described earlier. How did you see Satan at work attempting to steal, kill and destroy your hope in God's work in your life?

John 10:10 says that Jesus has come to give us life to the full. Close your time in prayer. Ask God to make you aware of Satan's schemes to rob you of hope and joy in Christ. Thank God for the full life that is available when we wait on Him.

Thursday

Begin your time in prayer. Ask God to enlighten your heart to the truth of His Word.

Read Psalm 42. Reread verse 4.

The Psalmist relates a fond memory of going with the crowds of people as they went to the temple to worship God during a time of feasting. This was an intensely joyful time of worshipping God in the community of believers. The Psalmist seems to express grief and isolation as this is a memory of the past not an experience he can presently enjoy.

Think of a time in which you experienced depth and richness in community—where others knew you deeply and you were able to express your deepest joy and sorrow. Describe this in the space below.

How did this experience of community affect the way that you related to God?

Now think of a time in which you have experienced deep isolation. Describe this experience in the space below.

How did this experience of isolation affect the way that you related to God?

How would you describe your current experience of community? How is this experience causing your relationship with God to grow, stagnate or falter?

If you are feeling isolated, examine your life. Is this a place of isolation in which God has led you to deepen your intimacy with Him, or is it a place you have chosen out of self-protection or fear?

Close your time in prayer. Ask God to make you aware of His presence in your life and thank Him for the community of believers He has given you.

Friday

Begin your time in prayer. Thank God for helping you understand His Word and applying it to your life.

Read Psalm 42. This is a song that has two verses and one chorus repeated in verses 5 and 11. Reread those verses.

Throughout the verses of this Psalm the writer has expressed deep longing for God's presence, despair at his circumstances and isolation. Each of these verses ends in a chorus that asks a question and then expresses the source of his hope (verses 5 & 11).

What question does the Psalmist ask?

Often we come to God in our pain with all sorts of complaints built up in our frustration and hopelessness. This question shows a moment in which the Psalmist in full view of God asks a clarifying question, "What is it that is truly causing me to be deeply unsettled in my soul?"

How would you answer this question today?

What does the Psalmist next tell us to do?

In the original Hebrew this idea of hoping in God means to *actively wait or expect*. We are told that we must wait on God and that we will praise Him. He will come through; maybe not in the way we expected or even desired Him to, but He will come through.

How have you seen God come through in a time of desperate waiting?

Close your time today by memorizing verse 11. Pray this verse back to God, describing to Him why your soul is downcast.

Affirm your intention to actively wait on Him.