



PSALMS *for the* JOURNEY

FAMILY ADVENT
DEVOTIONAL 2022

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 27

READ TOGETHER | PSALM 121

My Help Comes from the Lord A Song of Ascents.

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?
- ² My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
- ³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
- ⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵ The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade on your right hand.
- ⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
- ⁸ The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 27

LEARN TOGETHER

Where do you turn for comfort when you are anxious, tired, sad, or tempted? What do you seek to make you happy? Where does your help come from?

God gives us wonderful things in this life: family, friends, fun, food. Some of these may help us on life's journey, yet none of these were meant to bear the weight of our happiness. When we lean on any of them too hard, they crumble. Has too much good food ever given you a stomachache? Has a game become less fun when you lost? Has a friend or family member ever disappointed you?

Thankfully, there is One who can bear this weight. When we look to the Lord, we

look to someone who can actually help. Why? Because he “made heaven and earth” and “will neither slumber nor sleep”! He sent Jesus into this world to save us from our pattern of turning to worldly things for salvation. If we put our trust in Jesus, we can know that God will keep us—he will protect us.

This doesn't mean we can eat as much as we want without getting a stomachache. It doesn't even mean that we will avoid all disappointment. But it does mean that we can endure all evil with joy “from this time forth and forevermore” because we know we have a strong protector.

THINK TOGETHER

1. Where do you turn for help when you are anxious, tired, sad, or tempted? Why?
2. How do each of these things we turn to fall short?
3. In what specific ways is God better than the things you turn to?
4. What would it look like to turn to the Lord for help next time trouble comes your way?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pick something troubling your family or one of your family members. Then, ask the Lord for his help using specific lines from this psalm.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 4

READ TOGETHER | PSALM 124

Our Help Is in the Name of the Lord A Song of Ascents. Of David.

- ¹ If it had not been the Lord who was on our side—
let Israel now say—
- ² if it had not been the Lord who was on our side
when people rose up against us,
- ³ then they would have swallowed us up alive,
when their anger was kindled against us;
- ⁴ then the flood would have swept us away,
the torrent would have gone over us;
- ⁵ then over us would have gone
the raging waters.
- ⁶ Blessed be the Lord,
who has not given us
as prey to their teeth!
- ⁷ We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the fowlers;
the snare is broken,
and we have escaped!
- ⁸ Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 4

LEARN TOGETHER

How often do you stop to thank God for all the ways he has protected you and your family? Sickness, physical danger, impossible circumstances, financial problems—we tend to pray a lot during hard times. But once God rescues us, we often move on.

Have you ever considered how fragile we are? How disaster could strike us at any moment? And yet the Lord gives us breath and days and enjoyment. He is worthy of our praise not only during times of trouble but all of the time. He is the only reason our hearts keep beating.

Better yet, God has promised an even greater deliverance. Our biggest problem is not pain, suffering, or a bad mood.

Our biggest problem is ourselves. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). We bring all kinds of consequences upon ourselves, both in this life and for eternity. Consider: What would your life be like without Jesus? What kind of person would you be? What kind of eternity would you be looking forward to?

Christmas is a wonderful time to finish this sentence: “If it had not been the Lord who was on my side, then _____.”

After filling in the blank, thank him that the One who made heaven and earth came as a baby to help us.

THINK TOGETHER

1. What trouble has God delivered your family from?
2. If you have put your trust in Jesus, what specific sins are you thankful that he has forgiven?
3. If Jesus never came to save you, what kind of trouble could you see yourself getting into?

PRAY TOGETHER

Reflect on your answers to the questions above. Then spend time thanking God that he did send Jesus to save us.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 11

READ TOGETHER | PSALM 126

Restore Our Fortunes, O Lord A Song of Ascents.

- ¹ When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
- ² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then they said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”
- ³ The Lord has done great things for us;
we are glad.
- ⁴ Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like streams in the Negeb!
- ⁵ Those who sow in tears
shall reap with shouts of joy!
- ⁶ He who goes out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
bringing his sheaves with him.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 11

LEARN TOGETHER

We often look forward to Christmas morning with great anticipation. Why is that? Now imagine a Christmas Day that comes after a year's worth of miserable days. How much more wonderful would Christmas be?

This is what Israel experienced. God had taken them from their homeland and placed them in captivity for seventy years. On top of the fear, mistreatment, and lack of security they felt during those long years, they also had to live with the knowledge that it was their fault. Yet God had promised to return them home, and they knew there would be a day when he would make good on his promise. When that day came, they were overjoyed! We too live in a fallen and broken world.

And it's also our fault! Our sin introduced suffering into the world. God still gives us great things to enjoy, like Christmas morning; but we long for something better every time we skin a knee, lose a loved one, have a disappointing day, or struggle with temptation.

Thankfully, when Jesus came into the world, he began something that he will finish on an even greater day. If you are trusting in Jesus, you can already shout with joy: walking with him is better than a dream! An even greater day is coming—the best Christmas Day—when Jesus returns. We may weep now, but on that day, he will wipe every tear from our eyes (Rev. 21:4).

THINK TOGETHER

1. What are you looking forward to right now? Why?
2. Have you experienced a disappointment recently? What characteristic of God can comfort you?
3. Would it be easier to get through something hard if you knew something good was on the other side? Why?
4. In what ways will the new heaven and the new earth be better than Christmas morning?

PRAY TOGETHER

Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for specific ways that heaven will be better than anything here.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 18

READ TOGETHER | PSALM 127

Unless the Lord Builds the House A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.

- ¹ Unless the Lord builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.
- ² It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives to his beloved sleep.
- ³ Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
- ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children of one's youth.
- ⁵ Blessed is the man
who fills his quiver with them!
He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 18

LEARN TOGETHER

Have you ever built a block tower, only to have your brother or sister destroy it? Have you ever given yourself a stomach-ache worrying about tomorrow, only to find that the problem you thought was coming never happened? Parents, do you have seasons when you feel so stressed that you cut back on sleep to try to get more done? Do you tackle your list or end up feeling more stressed?

This psalm shows the difference between living like it is up to us versus living like it is up to God. Life involves wisdom and hard work. Yet we are quite limited in what we can accomplish on our own. We need God.

Consider how much better life is when we recognize who was in charge all along. When we live our lives like God is in

charge, we will still work hard, but we will also sleep at night. We will use our minds to think ahead and prepare, but we also joyfully accept God's plan. We will try to live according to God's ways instead of fighting him. We will see family as one of God's great gifts, living happily in each of our family roles, which will bring blessing.

On the other hand, when we fight against God's plans, we will experience trouble. Our biggest problems come when we act like God isn't in charge. On Christmas, we celebrate the God who took charge of our salvation: becoming one of us, perfectly depending on the Father, and dying to bring us back into God's family. When we trust in Jesus, we say, "God, your ways are better. Help me to follow you."

THINK TOGETHER

1. What are some things you can't do? See how many you can list!
2. Can you think of a time when you tried to do something on your own (i.e. you didn't pray or do things God's way)? How did that go?
3. What are some of the main reasons we try to do things without the Lord's help?
4. Can you save yourself from your sins? Once saved, can you keep yourself from falling away? How does this psalm help you appreciate the help Jesus gives us?

PRAY TOGETHER

Ask God to forgive you for specific times you tried to do things without his help. Then, thank him that he will supply his Spirit to help his people with every work this week.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 25

READ TOGETHER | PSALM 130

My Soul Waits for the Lord

A Song of Ascents.

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!

² O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

³ If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
that you may be feared.

⁵ I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;

⁶ my soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.

⁸ And he will redeem Israel
from all his iniquities.

WEEK OF DECEMBER 25

LEARN TOGETHER

Why is waiting so hard? It seems like we're always waiting: waiting in line, waiting for someone to finish, waiting for something to start. Waiting, waiting, waiting. Waiting is hard because we want the thing we're waiting for. We imagine how good it will be to have it, and we want it right now! Sometimes, we may want it so badly that we take matters into our own hands: cutting in line, complaining so the person in front of us hurries up, stealing when we don't have the money to buy something.

But God makes us wait. Waiting is part of being human. It's good for us. Waiting helps us see how much we need him; otherwise, we may forget. It makes us trust him; otherwise, we may just sin to get what we want now instead of waiting for something better later.

In this psalm, the writer shows us how to wait for God to fulfill his promises. We get to practice this waiting during the season we call Advent. Advent means "arrival"—waiting for Jesus's arrival on Christmas. During Advent, we practice waiting. Why? So that we can wait well for Jesus's second advent, when he comes again.

So, how do we go about waiting? We remind ourselves of who God is, what he has done, and what he has promised to do. We pray to God, asking him to come quickly. We decide every day that we will wait. And we help others around us do the same.

THINK TOGETHER

1. What was the longest you ever had to wait for something (in a line, on a car ride, etc.)? How did you get through it?
2. When are you most tempted to become impatient? How do you tend to react?
3. Why does God make us wait for things? Would you be satisfied if you never had to wait?
4. How does Jesus's second coming help you to wait?

PRAY TOGETHER

Ask God to grant you more patience, which he has already promised to give his people (Gal. 5:22-23). Ask for his help in specific situations when you know you will need his patience.



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