

praying AT HOME & TOGETHER

santa barbara community church



WEEK OF MAY 3, 2020

A PSALM FOR GUIDANCE AMID THE PRESSURE AND THREAT OF ENEMIES

Psalm 25

¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul; ²in you I trust, O my God. Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. ³No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame, but they will be put to shame who are treacherous without excuse.

⁴Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; ⁵guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. ⁶Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. ⁷Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD.

⁸Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. ⁹He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. ¹⁰All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant. ¹¹For the sake of your name, O LORD, forgive my iniquity,

though it is great. ¹²Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. ¹³He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. ¹⁴The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them. ¹⁵My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.

¹⁶Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. ¹⁷The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish. ¹⁸Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins. ¹⁹See how my enemies have increased and how fiercely they hate me! ²⁰Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you. ²¹May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you.

²²Redeem Israel, O God, from all their troubles!

An Acrostic

Psalm 25 is an acrostic – a kind of poetic construction in which each stanza begins with a successive letter in the Hebrew alphabet. For example, stanza 1 begins with aleph, the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet; stanza 2 with beth, the second letter, and so on. Other acrostic psalms are 9-10; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119.

This approach to writing a song or poem can seem artificial and arbitrary; it's hard to develop a linear progression of thought when each line has to begin with the next letter in the alphabet. But it also suggests the way the psalm is to be meditated and prayed. Think of the psalm not so much as a thesis

to be developed, with one phrase and idea building upon another, but as a diamond to be held up and looked at from every angle. Like facets on a diamond, its themes will repeat reinforce each other from different perspectives.

Psalms 25 is a great psalm for guidance amid the pressure and threat of enemies. I'm suggesting that there are five good ways to pray through this psalm – more, actually, but I like five! The outline for this prayer was suggested to me by Derek Kidner in his commentary on the psalms.

There is a lot more here than you can possibly accomplish in the time you have. Keep in mind the big idea, which is the kind of guidance this prayer asks for (see 2, below, and 2.d). It will revolutionize your prayer life. As you pray for yourself, pray also for “us”, the whole Body of Christ.

1. The ENEMIES. Verses 1-3, 15, 19-20. David's enemies are not only out to get him, but the way of life he stands for. Their way of life is based on threats, treachery and superior numbers. His way of life is built on trust and hope in God, and he refuses to fight them on their terms. Compare Psalm 147:10-11; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. **Declare your hope in God, commit yourself to not resort to the world's ways of doing things – Zechariah 4:6!**
2. The GUIDANCE you need. Verses 4-5, 8-9, 12, 14-15. David doesn't ask God to tell him what to do in his specific situation, but how to be, how to live. Note the use of the plural, “ways,” “paths.” God's will is not so much knowing what decision to make, as learning to think how God thinks, feel what God feels. This takes time. We want answers now; God wants us to learn his ways. **Pray that God would do this for you and in you, to conform you to the image of his Son. Some aspects of learning God's ways:**
 - a. PERSISTENCE. Verses 5c, 15. A wonderful cross reference is Hebrews 5:14 – “But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” **Pray for persistence in your walk with Christ.**
 - b. OBEDIENCE. Verse 9. Pray for a humble, teachable spirit.
 - c. FEAR. Verse 14. God honors humble reverence. It is the beginning of wisdom. **Pray for reverence.**
 - d. FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD: Verse 14. This captures the meaning of the whole prayer, and is exactly what Jesus had in mind in John 15:15. **Thank the Lord that he calls us his friends.**
3. The GUILT you carry. Verses 6-7, 11, 18. Ask God to forgive you for the parts of your heart that are just like the enemies who would destroy you. Compare 1 Peter 2:11.
4. The TRUST that sustains you. Verses 1-3, 15, 21. The word “hope” is used in the NIV. Other versions use “wait”, or “waiting.” **Pray for the grace and patience to wait for God to act. Spiritual maturity, like basic human maturity is what comes when the baby and child learn to wait, to not demand immediate gratification.** Compare Psalm 131.
5. The COMMUNITY you pray in is the community you pray for. Verse 22. Note how the way David has prayed for himself he now prays for his people – in a short summary prayer. **Pray that the things you have prayed for yourself be true for the church, its staff and missionaries.**