



# Devotional

April 12 - June 27

worst of times remind me that you are always by my side and that you are my shepherd. Open my heart to follow the path that you have laid out for me and refresh my soul so that I may feel whole with the power of your love. Amen

## **WEEK FIVE (MAY 10–16)**

**Day 131: May 10, 2020**

**Full Plan: Psalms 42:1–45:17**

**Abbreviated Plan: Psalms 42:1–11**

Psalm 42 reveals the heart at its most honest and vulnerable. It gives us permission to acknowledge our downcast soul, our doubts, and the pressures of those who don't believe in God. But it never gives up hope. What meaning does Psalm 42 bring you today?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 132: May 11, 2020**

**Full Plan: Psalms 26:1–49:20**

**Abbreviated Plan: Psalms 43:1–5**

Today's Psalms make quite a sound: mountains shake, waters roar, people praising, God shouting, labor pains, spoken wisdom. But amid the noise is this command: Be still, and know I am God. How well are you hearing God amid the noise of your life?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 133: May 12, 2020**

**Full Plan: Psalms 50:1–53:6**

**Abbreviated Plan: Psalms 72:1–20**

Right actions are not enough. We must do them out of a “clean heart,” from penitence, humility, and a seeking after God. The alternative is the way of the fool, who says there is no God. How will you orient your heart Godward today, rather than inward?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 134: May 13, 2020**

**Full Plan: Psalms 54:1–56:13**

**Abbreviated Plan: Psalms 73:1–28**

“Cast your burden on the Lord” (Ps 55:22) means that God can not only carry your burden (cast your burden ON the Lord); God can also carry you (and he will sustain you). God is strong enough to do both, so we need to “release” ourselves to God and “receive” the love and power of God.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 135: May 14, 2020**

**Full Plan: Psalms 57:1–59:17**

**Abbreviated Plan: Psalms 89:1–29**

The Psalmist does not pray for the death of his enemies, only that they will suffer the consequences of their own sin. (59:11-13) The worst punishment we experience is the consequences of our own sins, and the wrong choices we make.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 136: May 15, 2020**

**Full Plan: Psalms 60:1–63:11**

**Abbreviated Plan: Psalms 89:30–52**

The image of the rock is a recurring one in these readings. It is an image of strength and stability, which only God can provide. Amid change, instability, and uncertainty, how might you depend on God to be led to a rock “higher than I”?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 137: May 16, 2020**

**Full Plan: Psalms 64:1–68:35**

**Abbreviated Plan: Psalms 90:1–17**

There are many images of nature in today’s Psalms, reminding us that God is evident all around us (seas, rain, mountains, clouds, etc.) Whenever you feel alone, you can just open my eyes, breathe in the Spirit, and enjoy God’s presence around you.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

## **May 10–16, 2020: Weekly Devotional by Susan Northcutt**

I like to learn. At the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at USF I participate in classes (such as “The Silent Generation” and “Beginning Dulcimer”), volunteer on the Faculty Support Team and lecture. Yup, I like to learn.

I approached this week’s readings (Psalms 42-68) in this frame of mind. These seventeen psalms are drawn from Book II of the Psalter (which is often referred to as an anthology of sacred poetry). They are wide-ranging, dwelling on the storms of life as well as praising the God that delivers us from suffering. Some psalms are deeply personal (and I find many verses profound. See, for instance, Psalms 51:50 and 62:1-2.) Others are national prayers, focusing on the nation of Israel and the Davidic kingdom.

As I read and re-read these psalms, I wanted to know more about them--in a high-altitude and big-picture way.

What “connects” these psalms? I don’t think an overarching spiritual or literary theme is revealed. In fact, many spiritual themes appear: hope, faithfulness, righteousness, trust, salvation, deliverance.

Is the connection located in structure or in rhetoric? Probably not, because each psalm is an example of lyric poetry--vivid, real, using both repetition and rich imagery. Further, in the tradition of Hebrew poetry, each psalm makes effective use of parallelism (where two lines of poetry are balanced, with the

second line echoing or contrasting with the first line).

So, what connects these psalms? In my opinion it's the type of Psalms; most of them are laments. There are eleven personal or individual laments (42, 42, 51, 54-57, 59, 61, 63 and 64). And three communal or national laments (44, 58 and 60).

Laments are rather common in the Psalter with forty psalms so classified. They follow a specific three-part pattern. First, a lament begins with a cry to God for help. "Vindicate me, O God" (Ps. 43:1a); "Have mercy on me, O God" (Ps. 51:1a), "Save me, O God" (Ps. 54:1a).

Following the call or cry for help, a lament describes the trouble, problem or sorrow. It may be sickness, death, a false accusation (rumors, gossip, lies), persecution of some sort (such as, in today's culture, bullying or harassment), or sin (referring to anything that brings us distress and makes us anxious). Lavish images often appear in this second part (read psalms 56 and 64).

The final part of a lament contains an appeal to God's steadfast love to deliver us--to restore, renew and reassure us in our time of urgent need. Awe inspiring!

Prayer: read aloud or sing a lament psalm from this week to experience God's presence and glory.