



NORTHMETROCHURCH

ASCENT: *LIVING WORSHIP THROUGH THE PSALMS*

STUDY GUIDE AND WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL
for COMMUNITY GROUPS, FAMILIES, and INDIVIDUALS

FEBRUARY 24 – MARCH 30, 2019

INTRODUCTION TO ASCENT

The Psalms of Ascent (Psalm 120–134) continue to be significant and central to worship for Jews and Christians alike. Throughout the Old Testament, three times a year the Jewish nation traveled long distances to worship together at the Temple in Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16). This was a huge sacrifice, and yet a highlight on the calendar. There was nothing more important to the people than worshipping God together in the Temple. The Psalms of Ascent are a collection of songs, poems, and prose written and sung in ***preparation for worship of the living God as the people came together in unity***. As the throngs of worshipers came from afar and arrived at the southern steps of the Temple, and as they climbed each step, in one voice and once accord, they recited the words of the Psalms of Ascent.

Thousands of years later, God's people, from every tribe, nation, and tongue gather regularly to worship God. We call this church. *But, is it still valuable? Necessary? Life is busy. Can't we worship alone, online? Do church our way?*

God's people gathering to worship Him is central to Christianity. We are called to worship Him as an integral and central part of our daily lives. We are called to worship Him together. Understanding worship as spiritual and practical was integral to Jewish life. Attending church is not something mundane or routine. We gather – prepared and expectant – to meet with the One true living God.

Please use this daily devotional and Bible study guide as a companion to the Ascent teaching series and a support to community group and individual Bible studies.

NOTE: The following is simply a guide. Feel free to study what helps you and don't feel burdened to do it all. The goal is to draw closer to God and prepare hearts for corporate worship as we gather as a community on Sunday's in February and March.

In Christ,

Pastor James

John 3:30 *He must become greater...*



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WEEK ONE FEBRUARY 24–MARCH 2019

Read Psalms 120–122

Outside Resource: You Version app *The Ascent* Devotional Plan Days 1–3 with videos

Big Idea: *Worship is a Journey of Preparation and Sacrifice to meet the Living God*

Ascent Basics:

Psalm 120: Following God is not easy in a culture often opposed to God. Despite daily struggles, the author realizes he is never alone.

Psalm 121: Finding God as our Helper in the midst of trouble.

Psalm 122: Joy and sacrifice in church going – we gather to worship Him, and by doing so, find peace and purpose.

Weekly Study and Journal Questions:

Psalm 120

- Where has our writer journeyed and with whom?
- What is the meaning and implication of the word “Woe?” (v.5)
- What were his travelers like? (v.6) What sort of effect has this had on him?
- Outside of being liars and deceitful (v.2) how else does our writer describe his travelers (v.7)
- What sort of person is our writer? What influence does he try to have on his travelers?
- As you live in the world, how can you be an example of Jesus as an act of worship every day?

Psalm 121

- Where does the author look for help? (vv. 1–2)
Which mountains do you suppose this person is referring to? (Psalm 87.1–2)
- Who ultimately made those mountains and is this source of help? (Psalm 123.1; Isa. 40.26; Ps. 124.8)
- What or who is the source of your help? Who or what do you place your confidence in when it comes to life decisions, crisis of faith and the provision of daily living? What happens when you face the forks in the roads of life when you do not know which way to go?



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The author reminds us that the only true source of our help comes from the Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth. His Word is our spiritual compass.

- What assurances does the author give that the Lord will help him? (vv.3–4)
- What does he mean by “He who keeps you”?
- What is the implication that the Lord neither slumbers or sleep?
- List the ways the author states how the Lord helps him on his journey (vv. 5–8). Which examples are physical, spiritual, and eternal?
- What then is the overall implication of these verses when it comes to the assurance of God’s help?

Psalm 122

- What was David happy about? Why would this bring him joy? For instance, where would their feet be standing?
- What aspects of corporate worship does David focus on? What stands out to you and why?
- Read Deuteronomy 16:16. The Jews sacrificed much to worship at the Temple. What do we sacrifice in order to worship together? Do you consider church going an obligation or a joy? How could this Psalm change your attitude toward worshipping together?

Bringing Worship Home – Application and Next Step Questions:

- Is it a pleasure for you to go and worship with fellow Christians? Is it expressed by your determination and dedication? Take some time to observe your heart’s desire to worship the Lord. Is it pleasurable or painful?
- How do you prepare for Sunday worship? What daily activity prepares you for worship? What happens before church on Sunday? What is your attitude when you arrive to church on Sunday? Why do you come to worship and what do you offer to the Lord in worship?
- How thankful are you for your church and the city you live in? How faithful to the Lord are you in observing the ordinances of the Lord? For instance, have you been baptized as a believer as the Lord commanded (Matt. 28.19–20; Mk. 16.16; Acts 2.38)?
- When was the last time you prayed for political leaders instead of complaining about them (1 Tim. 2.1–3)? Here are five ways to pray for those in authority over us: a) For their health and safety (Ezra 6.10). b) For executing justice (Rom. 13.3–4; 1 Pet. 2.14). c) That they may follow the Lord’s ways and repent when they don’t (2 Chron. 33.1–20). d) They may govern with wisdom for the “welfare of the city” (Jer. 29.7). e) That God would accomplish His purposes through them regardless their willingness to be used by Him (Prov. 21.1).



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WEEK TWO MARCH 3–MARCH 9, 2019

Read Psalms 123–124

Outside Resource: You Version app *The Ascent* Devotional Plan Days 4–5 with videos

Big Idea: *Worship is not about us, it's all about Him*

Ascent Basics:

Psalm 123: God is my source – the author looks to God for total dependence.

Psalm 124: God is my help — the author looks to God as his only source for help.

Weekly Study and Journal Questions:

Psalm 123

- What sort of view does the Psalm writer have of God? (vv. 1–2) What comparison does he make between man and God? What does the psalm writer want from the Lord?
- What is the psalm writer's petition? (vv. 3–4) Why is he making this petition? What are others doing to the psalm writer and how does this make him feel?

Psalm 124

- What does David want Israel to say? (vv.1–2a) Why does he repeat the opening statement?
- What seems to be the great concern? (vv. 2b–5) How did David compare Israel's concern? What could have been Israel's fate? What New Testament story did Jesus share that is similar to this?
- List how God blessed Israel in verses 6–8? Describe what the dangers that Israel was kept from? What is verse 8 restating and why?

Bringing Worship Home – Application and Next Step Questions:

- Have you been ridiculed for your faith? Do you think about the multitude of believers who are under intense persecution for their faith in Jesus? What must we do in light of this knowledge?
- How can you have a realistic attitude of dependence on God through trials?
- Read Romans 8:1, 37–39. What do these verses mean to you and why? How can you live in the freedom of knowing Jesus?
- Spend some time praising God for His protection, ongoing care and assurances over your life.



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WEEK THREE MARCH 10–MARCH 16, 2019

Read Psalms 125–126

Outside Resource: You Version app *The Ascent* Devotional Plan Days 6–7 with videos

Big Idea: *Worship restores relationship with us and God and us and others*

Ascent Basics:

Psalm 125: A Song of Trust – God does good to those who are good. We can trust in Him for He cannot be moved.

Psalm 126: Thanking God we have a home – looking back at the journey of the captivity and see that is was a prelude to blessing.

Weekly Study and Journal Questions:

Psalm 125

- How does the writer describe the Lord and those who trust in Him? What is the state of those who trust in the Lord (v. 1b)? What is the duration of the Lord’s protection for His own (v.2b)?
- What is a “scepter” and what does it represent? (v3) What is God’s promise for the righteous? What will the righteous do or not do concerning wrong doing?
- When God’s pilgrims encounter trials and temptations, what does it produce? 1. Endurance, character, and hope – Rom. 5.3–4 2. Crown of life – James 1.12–18 3. Steadfastness – James 1.2–4 4. Patience – Col. 1.11
- What is the writer asking the Lord to do? (v4) What does he mean by “those who are good?” What “good” do you suppose the writer wants God to do?
- Describe the ways of the unrighteous? What will be their fate? (v5)

Psalm 126

- Who did the work of bringing Israel back from exile? (vv. 1–3) How does the psalmist describe those who came back? Describe their reaction? What were the comments by the nations and the people of Israel?
- What was it like for you when the Lord opened your heart and eyes to the revelation that Jesus had died for your sins and has delivered you from the bondage of sin and death? How did you respond when you first realized that you were no longer destined for the wrath of God, but now a child of His eternal inheritance? Did your song change? Did you give glory to the Lord with an expression of grateful praises? What was or has been the reaction of those who knew you?



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- List what the psalmist prayed to God for Israel? (vv. 4) What do you think he meant by “as the streams in the south” in verse 4b?
- How specific was the psalmist request for the blessing of the exiles who would return to Jerusalem? (vv. 5–6)

Bringing Worship Home – Application and Next Step Questions:

- How secure is your salvation? Do you have confidence that if you were to die today that you will be in heaven with the Lord?
- What are you trusting in today for salvation? Is it the good you do or in the power and sovereign care of the Lord as your place your complete trust in His only Son, Christ Jesus our Lord?

WEEK FOUR MARCH 17–MARCH 23, 2019

Read Psalms 127–132

Outside Resource: You Version app *The Ascent* Devotional Plan Days 8–13 with videos

Big Idea: *Worship of God transforms our lives*

Ascent Basics:

Psalm 127: Unless the Lord builds the House – transforming our lives is what God does, no matter how far we are from Him or how messy we are.

Psalm 128: The Blessing of Fearing God – fearing God is a good thing and not scary – it leads us to see Him clearly.

Psalm 129: Blessed are those who are Persecuted – past troubles cannot add up to the blessing of peace and prosperity we have in God.

Psalm 130: The Song of Redemption – The person who stands and is amazed at God’s willingness to forgive understands both his own sin and the extent of God’s unfailing love.

Psalm 131: A Childlike Faith – David pictured faith as a young child nestled close against his mother. This contrast the attitude of the arrogance that challenges God’s word.

Psalm 132: God’s Oath and Covenant – The author recalls God’s covenant and promise to David that assures Israel and her destiny.



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Weekly Study and Journal Questions:

Psalm 127

- Summarize verses 1–2. What is the key idea of these two verses? What is Solomon’s view of work? What truth does the end of verse 2 reveal for us?
- What then should be the proper perspective in regard to work and rest? Charles Spurgeon has this to say: “All the works that we can ever do, be they what they may, can never bring such glory to God as a single act of trust in Him.” Consider these living truths in regard to our labor: 1. Are we to work? Yes – “He who tills his land will have plenty of food, but he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty” – Proverbs 28.19 2. Are we to depend on the Lord? Yes – For salvation (Eph. 2.8–9); wisdom (James 1.5); everything (Ps. 104.27) and in everything (Prov. 3.5–6). He is our rock, fortress, and deliverer (Ps. 18.2). 3. Are we to magnify the Lord? Yes – By giving thanks to Him alone (Col. 3.17) 4. Are we to do all things for the Lord? Yes – “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men” (Col. 3.23). 5. Are we to enjoy and rest in our labor? Yes – “There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This...is from the hand of God” (Prov. 2.24).
- What is the key idea of verses 3–5? In what ways is dependency on God shown here? How would you describe how children are like arrows and how does that relate to verse 5?

Bringing Worship Home – Application and Next Step Questions:

- From Psalm 127. What areas of your life and worship do you try to do in your own strength and power? How is it working out for you? Read John 15:1–5 and Phil. 4:13. If Christ lives in you and through you, how can you experience a better life? How can you allow His strength and power to guide you?
- From Psalm 128, what is your foundational view of God? Do you have a high or low view of Him? Where does this view come from? How can you have a healthy fear of the Lord?

WEEK FIVE MARCH 24–30, 2019

Read Psalms 133–134

Outside Resource: You Version app *The Ascent* Devotional Plan Days 14–15 with videos

Big Idea: True Worship brings Unity

Ascent Basics:

Psalm 133: The Family of God – worship brings God’s people together as a family.



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Psalm 134: The Journey – the Ascent concludes by giving thanks to the Lord for the privilege and joy to be a servant of the Lord.

Weekly Study and Journal Questions:

Psalm 133

- Explain in your own words verse 1. Is it a statement or a command?
- How does David describe what unity among God’s people is like?

Psalm 134

- What does the writer of this psalm imply by blessing the Lord? Who are the servants who serve Him day and night? Read (Deut. 10.8; 1 Chronicles 9.33; 23.26,30; 25).
- What does the writer ask the Lord to do for those who come to serve Him faithfully? How does He describe the Lord? Why is that important?

Bringing Worship Home – Application and Next Step Questions:

- Read John 17, Ephesians 4:3 and Acts 2:42–47. What would worship at NMC look like if we lived Jesus’ prayer and acted on the first churches example of unity?
- How can you personally bring unity rather than disunity to the body of Christ at NMC?
- How will the Psalms of Ascent change your worship of God daily as well as corporate and together worship on Sunday?
- Read and reflect on Psalm 150. Worship was loud, majestic and continuous. How can you worship God the same way?

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- You Version App – Hillsong The Ascent 15-day devotional
- The Psalm of Ascent Study Guide – Glen Tatum
<http://www.rossmoorbiblestudy.org/lessons/psalms.pdf>
- Israel Teaching Letter – Psalms of Ascent [https://www.bridgesforpeace.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/TL WEB_0613.pdf](https://www.bridgesforpeace.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/TL_WEB_0613.pdf)

Check out our NMC Spotify *Ascent Celebration* playlist to get you ready and prepared to worship! Open Spotify and search Ascent Celebration or use the link below. If you don’t have Spotify, download it for free at your app store.

<https://open.spotify.com/user/aa4c6m00f2whd3e2dnq4iq43g/playlist/1YNF87fAhDeXJ8bgCZ4VuL?si=w0mOOEiSTIWje6cl4u-urw>