



# Summer of Ascents

**Grace Community Church Journal**  
**JUN 15 - SEP 28, 2025**

*All scriptures are provided in the ESV translation unless otherwise stated. We acknowledge that "The Message" is not a direct, word-for-word translation of the Bible. Instead, it's a paraphrased or interpretive version that aims to express the heart and message of Scripture in a more conversational and contemporary way.*

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# Summer of Ascents

How To Use This Journal . . . . .	Page 1
Digging Deeper Resources . . . . .	Page 2
<b>Week 1:</b> SUN, JUN 15 - Introduction . . . . .	Page 3
<b>Week 2:</b> SUN, JUN 22 - Psalm 120 . . . . .	Page 13
<b>Week 3:</b> SUN, JUN 29 - Psalm 121 . . . . .	Page 25
<b>Week 4:</b> SUN, JUL 6 - Psalm 122 . . . . .	Page 35
<b>Week 5:</b> SUN, JUL 13 - Psalm 123 . . . . .	Page 47
<b>Week 6:</b> SUN, JUL 20 - Psalm 124 . . . . .	Page 59
<b>Week 7:</b> SUN, JUL 27 - Psalm 125 . . . . .	Page 71
<b>Week 8:</b> SUN, AUG 3 - Psalm 126 . . . . .	Page 83
<b>Week 9:</b> SUN, AUG 10 - Psalm 127 . . . . .	Page 95
<b>Week 10:</b> SUN, AUG 17 - Psalm 128 . . . . .	Page 107
<b>Week 11:</b> SUN, AUG 24 - Psalm 129 . . . . .	Page 119
<b>Week 12:</b> SUN, AUG 31 - Psalm 130 . . . . .	Page 131
<b>Week 13:</b> SUN, SEP 7 - Psalm 131 . . . . .	Page 143
<b>Week 14:</b> SUN, SEP 14 - Psalm 132 . . . . .	Page 155
<b>Week 15:</b> SUN, SEP 21 - Psalm 133 . . . . .	Page 167
<b>Week 16:</b> SUN, SEP 28 - Psalm 134 . . . . .	Page 179

# HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

This journal will guide you through the Psalms of Ascents—15 short songs that God’s people sang as they traveled to Jerusalem. These were songs for the journey—reminders of God’s presence, faithfulness, and care along the way.

## ***Each week includes:***

- **Sermon Notes** – a place to reflect on Sunday’s message.
- **Devotionals** – opportunities to study and reflect on the Psalm.
- **Discussion Guide** – built for discussion with a group, a friend, or even on your own.

## ***A few things to remember:***

- Try setting aside 10–20 minutes, 2–3 times a week.
- Let this be a space where you talk with God, not just learn about Him.
- Mark it up—write, underline, wrestle, pray. Make it your own.

***You’re on a journey. Let these Psalms guide your steps.***

# DIGGING DEEPER RESOURCES



## ***Series Messages***

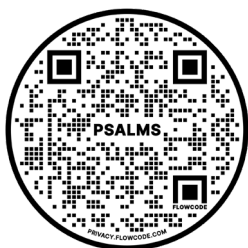
Missed a message or want to rewatch a favorite? We've got you covered! Just scan the QR code or visit **[gracewired.com/current-series](https://gracewired.com/current-series)** to watch anytime—it's all right there waiting for you!



## ***Rightnow Media***

Log in to your FREE account today and check out our exclusive Grace Channel, featuring *Summer of Ascents*—part of the world's largest streaming library of Bible study videos! You'll also find great content for kids, students, women, men, singles, couples, and more.

Just scan the QR code or visit **[gracewired.com/resource](https://gracewired.com/resource)** to get started!



## ***The Bible Project***

The Bible Project brings Scripture to life through creative, animated videos that help you understand and apply the Bible as one unified story that leads to Jesus. Check out their video collection on the Psalms—a powerful tool to deepen your understanding and grow your faith.

To explore more scan the QR code or visit **[thebibleproject.com](https://thebibleproject.com)**.





## Week One

### ***What Are the Psalms?***

Thousands of years ago, the Psalms were written by real people walking through real-life joys, sorrows, questions, and hopes. They gave voice to what people were feeling and taught them how to bring all of it to God.

This ancient collection of 150 songs and prayers is honest, raw, and deeply relational. The Psalms don't shy away from emotion or pain; instead, they show us how to talk to God in every season of life. Jesus Himself quoted the Psalms often—even in His final moments on the cross. And when we read them today, we're joining a long line of believers who have turned to these words to worship, to pray, and to connect with God.

### ***What Are the Psalms of Ascent?***

Tucked within the Psalms are 15 short but powerful songs, Psalms 120–134, known as the Songs of Ascent. These were sung by pilgrims making the uphill journey to Jerusalem, often during the three major festivals each year (see Deuteronomy 16:16). The path was physically challenging, dusty, steep, and hot—but spiritually, it was a time of preparation. These songs helped travelers turn their hearts toward God with every step they took.

They weren't walking alone, and they weren't singing alone. These Psalms were a shared soundtrack for the journey. They were songs that helped them move from isolation to community, from fear to worship, from despair to hope.

### ***Why Do They Matter Now?***

We may not be climbing mountains on foot, but we're all on a journey. The Psalms of Ascent give us language for the path we're on and remind us we don't walk it alone. Like those ancient pilgrims, we're invited to lift our eyes, re-center our hearts, and walk together toward God's presence.

These Psalms have lasted through centuries because they're still doing what they were always meant to do: help us find our way—honestly, hopefully, and in community.

Sunday • JUN 15

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Introduction to the Psalms of Ascent**

**Notes:**

[illegible]

# Summer of Ascents



***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DEVOTIONAL

The Book of Psalms is the prayer book of the Bible. They are the songs of God's people across centuries. In its pages, we find songs of joy, cries of despair, declarations of justice, confessions of sin, and shouts of celebration. The Psalms give language to every part of the human experience and invite us to bring all of it to God.

Nestled within this book is a special collection: the Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 120–134). These 15 psalms were sung by the people of Israel as they journeyed to Jerusalem for the annual feasts. Three times a year, families, neighbors, and whole communities would travel on foot, climbing toward the city of God, singing these words as they walked.

They're short. They're honest. They're layered. They talk about conflict and peace, hope and hardship, fear and faith. And as we read them today, they remind us that spiritual life is not static, it's a journey. These are songs for the climb—steps toward the heart of God.

As we begin this 16-week series, we're stepping into a well-worn path. These psalms have carried generations of believers through doubt, joy, fatigue, and renewal. Wherever you find yourself today, you're invited to walk with them—to be shaped by their rhythm, their honesty, and their hope.

These psalms were sung in community. What do you think it means to grow spiritually with others?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# REFLECT & RESPOND

## ***Reflect***

Imagine you're joining the ancient pilgrimage to Jerusalem. What do you see closest around you? Who's walking with you right now?

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The Psalms of Ascent were sung on the road. What does your “road” currently look like? Steady, uphill, uncertain, winding?

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These psalms often begin in pain or longing and end in trust or joy.  
Which of those words feels closest to where you are right now? Why?

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***Respond***

Write a prayer of intention. Not a polished paragraph, just a sentence or two to say, “God, I’m here. I want to walk with You, whatever you have for me on this journey.”

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Read:***

Psalms 1 sets the tone for the entire book of Psalms. It paints a picture of someone who delights in God's Word and is deeply rooted—like a tree planted by streams of water. That's the vision.

Over the next 14 weeks, as we walk through the Psalms of Ascent, we'll be challenged to root ourselves in truth, worship, and God's presence, even in the middle of stress, sorrow, or uncertainty.

These psalms will help us keep moving forward, but not rushed. It's a slow ascent, a sacred journey.

## ***Launch Question:***

What's something you do (or wish you did) to stay grounded when life gets chaotic?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 1 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language).

## ***Discussion Questions:***

- What stands out to you in Psalm 1? Is there a word or image that lingers?
- What do you think it means to “delight in the law of the Lord”? How is that different from just reading the Bible?
- The psalm paints two pictures: a thriving tree and wind-blown chaff. Where do you feel more like a tree? Where do you feel more like chaff?
- The person in verse 2 meditates “day and night.” What does meditation on God's Word look like practically?

- In what ways do you feel pressure to “walk in the counsel of the wicked” or be influenced by unhealthy voices?
- What voices are currently shaping the way you see yourself or God? Are they rooted in truth?
- What kind of “fruit” do you hope your life produces in this next season?

### **Challenge/Reflection:**

Is there a small, doable practice you can begin this week to root yourself more deeply in God?

*Examples: start your day with five minutes of quiet, memorize a short verse, pray a one-sentence prayer at lunch, write one line of gratitude each evening.*

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Before you pray together, take a few minutes of silence. Invite everyone to reflect on this question:

“Where do I feel unrooted or distracted in life right now?”

Ask each person to share one word or short phrase (no pressure to go deep). This could be something like “overwhelmed,” “unfocused,” “searching,” or “restless.”

Then pray for each person by name. You can say something simple like:

“God, would you root [Name] in your presence this week. Plant them near your living water. Let your Word nourish them, even in the dry places.”

### **Please Note:**

Don’t force deep vulnerability too fast. Week 1 is about creating a safe space. Focus on building connection and trust. If your group is new, a light activity (like sharing a fun “high and low” from the week) before the discussion can help people warm up. As the leader, model reflection with sincerity, but don’t feel pressure to overshare. Let the Scripture and silence do some of the work.

## Psalm 120

*A song of ascents.*

- <sup>1</sup> I call on the LORD in my distress,  
and he answers me.
- <sup>2</sup> Save me, LORD,  
from lying lips  
and from deceitful tongues.
- <sup>3</sup> What will he do to you,  
and what more besides,  
you deceitful tongue?
- <sup>4</sup> He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows,  
with burning coals of the broom bush.
- <sup>5</sup> Woe to me that I dwell in Meshek,  
that I live among the tents of Kedar!
- <sup>6</sup> Too long have I lived  
among those who hate peace.
- <sup>7</sup> I am for peace;  
but when I speak, they are for war.

Sunday • JUN 22

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 120**

**Notes:**

[illegible]

# Summer of Ascents



***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 120 is a cry from someone who feels like they don't belong.

The writer is living in Meshek (Asia Minor) and Kedar (North Arabia)—symbolic places of violence and alienation. These were tribal areas known for being far from Jerusalem both physically and spiritually. It's like saying, "I'm living in a world that doesn't care about truth, peace, or God."

This is the starting point of the pilgrimage. Not celebration. Not resolution. A desperate cry: "God, help me."

Notice what the psalmist does—he calls out to the Lord. And God answers. That's important. The journey of faith doesn't begin when everything is okay. It begins when you decide to be honest with God. When you stop pretending and cry out.

This psalm gives us permission to feel the dissonance of the world around us. To say, "I want peace, but everyone around me seems addicted to conflict." That was true then. It's still true now.

But the first step is still the same: call out.

How would you describe the psalmist's situation, mindset, desires, etc.?

Where in your life do you feel like you're "dwelling in Meshek"—stuck in an environment that feels far from God?

What might it look like for you to be honest with God about that this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 120 again slowly, this time in The Message. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out.

### ***Psalm 120***

<sup>1-2</sup> I'm in trouble. I cry to God,

desperate for an answer:

"Deliver me from the liars, God!

They smile so sweetly but lie through their teeth."

<sup>3-4</sup> Do you know what's next, can you see what's coming,  
all you bold-faced liars?

Pointed arrows and burning coals  
will be your reward.

<sup>5-7</sup> I'm doomed to live in Meshech,

cursed with a home in Kedar,

My whole life lived camping

among quarreling neighbors.

I'm all for peace, but the minute

I tell them so, they go to war!

**Reflect**

What stood out to you while reading this translation of the Psalm?

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Where do you feel like you’re “living among those who hate peace”? Are there situations, relationships, or environments that feel combative or draining?

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What are you tired of pretending isn't a problem? If you could write your own first line to a psalm, what would it say?

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***Respond***

What would “moving toward God” look like this week? Not perfectly—but honestly?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

What's one place or situation in your life where you've felt like you didn't belong, or were misunderstood?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 120 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language).

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Understanding the Psalm:**

- What feelings or emotions do you hear in the voice of the psalmist?
- What stands out to you about the setting or situation this person is describing?
- Verses 5–6 mention Meshek and Kedar. What might those places have symbolized for an ancient Israelite?
- What could they symbolize for us today? Are there any “modern Mesheks” you feel surrounded by?

### **Making It Personal:**

- The psalmist says, “I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war.” Have you ever tried to be a peacemaker and you were rejected or misunderstood?
- This psalm is a cry from exile and a prayer. How does it challenge your usual view of prayer?

### **The Journey Begins:**

- Why do you think this is the first psalm in the Psalms of Ascent?
- What does it tell us about how a spiritual journey actually begins?

### ***Prayer Prompt:***

Ask everyone to think of one situation that's been bothering them lately—something that's felt frustrating, off, heavy, or somewhere they feel stuck. Not necessarily the biggest crisis, just something real.

Then say:

“Take that frustration, and turn it into a one sentence prayer. It doesn't have to be pretty or polished—just honest.” Then ask people to write their sentence down.

Examples:

- “God, I'm tired of pretending things are okay.”
- “God, I need peace where there's tension.”
- “God, help me feel seen.”

Go around and let people speak their sentence prayers out loud. Then close the time by praying for the group and reading Psalm 120:1 aloud again:

- “I call on the Lord in my distress, and He answers me.”

### ***Please Note:***

Psalm 120 gives permission to bring the hard stuff to God. It sets a tone of honesty for the entire journey. Model that openness by going first. You don't need to have answers, your role is to be present and listen, not fix pain.

If the group opens up deeply, consider slowing down. You may not need to finish every question. Deep listening is more powerful than moving on too quickly.

If group discussion starts slow, try letting people journal or write responses for 2–3 minutes before sharing. It helps people name things more clearly and comfortably.



## Week Three

### **Psalm 121**

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord,

who made heaven and earth.

<sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot be moved;

he who keeps you will not slumber.

<sup>4</sup> Behold, he who keeps Israel

will neither slumber nor sleep.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord is your keeper;

the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

<sup>6</sup> The sun shall not strike you by day,

nor the moon by night.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord will keep you from all evil;

he will keep your life.

<sup>8</sup> The Lord will keep

your going out and your coming in

from this time forth and forevermore.

Sunday • JUN 29

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 121**

**Notes:**

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 121 begins with a question: “I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?” It’s the kind of question you ask on a journey when you’re tired, unsure, or overwhelmed. The hills could have been intimidating—filled with potential dangers like bandits or wild animals. Or maybe they were inspiring, symbolizing the nearness of Jerusalem, the city on a hill.

Either way, the answer is unshakable: “My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

This is no distant deity. This is a God who keeps watch. The psalmist uses the word *shamar* (“to watch over” or “keep”) six times. The Lord is portrayed as a tireless guardian—He does not slumber. Unlike idols that had to be woken up or appeased, the God of Israel is always attentive, always aware, always near.

And this keeping isn’t limited to your “spiritual life.” He watches over your coming and going. He watches your steps, your nights, your days. The whole of your life is held in His care.

Psalm 121 invites us to look beyond the mountains, beyond the obstacles, and fix our eyes on the One who never loses sight of us.

What “hills” are you looking at right now—challenges, questions, fears?

What does it mean to you that God is watching over your “coming and going”?

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# REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 121 again slowly, this time in *The Message*. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

## ***Psalm 121***

<sup>1-2</sup> I look up to the mountains;  
does my strength come from mountains?  
No, my strength comes from God,  
who made heaven, and earth, and mountains.

<sup>3-4</sup> He won't let you stumble,  
your Guardian God won't fall asleep.  
Not on your life! Israel's  
Guardian will never doze or sleep.

<sup>5-6</sup> God's your Guardian,  
right at your side to protect you—  
Shielding you from sunstroke,  
sheltering you from moonstroke.

<sup>7-8</sup> God guards you from every evil,  
he guards your very life.  
He guards you when you leave and when you return,  
he guards you now, he guards you always.

**Reflect**

Verse 3 says, “He will not let your foot slip.” Where do you feel like you’re on shaky ground?

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Verse 6 says, “The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.” Where do you need God’s protection right now? Physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

What's something you were scared of as a kid? What helped you feel safe?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 121 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language).

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Engaging the Text:**

- What lines or images in this psalm stick with you?
- The psalmist lifts their eyes to the hills. What do you imagine them seeing or feeling in that moment?
- Why do you think this psalm shifts from a personal voice ("I lift up my eyes") to a reassuring voice ("He will not let your foot slip...")? What do you make of that change?

### **Connecting to Life:**

- The phrase "keep" could also be translated "guard/watch-over/protect." What images come to mind when you hear these words?
- Are there times in your life when you've doubted whether God was really paying attention?
- How do you usually respond when you're anxious or uncertain? What role does your faith play in those moments?
- Verse 7 says God will "keep you from all harm." How do you interpret that in a world where harm still happens?
- What does it mean for God to be your "keeper" even when the road is dangerous?
- Where are you tempted to turn for help when trouble comes? How do those "protectors" compare to God?

## ***Prayer Prompt:***

Invite each person to name one thing they need God's help with right now. Then pray over each request as a group, trusting in God's care and protection.

### Psalm 122

*A song of ascents.*

- <sup>1</sup> I was glad when they said to me,  
“Let us go to the house of the Lord!”
- <sup>2</sup> Our feet have been standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem!
- <sup>3</sup> Jerusalem—built as a city  
that is bound firmly together,  
<sup>4</sup> to which the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the Lord,  
as was decreed for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
- <sup>5</sup> There thrones for judgment were set,  
the thrones of the house of David.
- <sup>6</sup> Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!  
“May they be secure who love you!”
- <sup>7</sup> Peace be within your walls  
and security within your towers!”
- <sup>8</sup> For my brothers and companions’ sake  
I will say, “Peace be within you!”
- <sup>9</sup> For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,  
I will seek your good.

Sunday • JUL 6

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 122**

**Notes:**

[illegible]



# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 122 marks a shift in tone from the desperate plea of Psalm 120 and the anxious searching of Psalm 121. Here, the traveler has arrived. The psalmist rejoices in going to the house of the Lord, not just because it's the temple, but because it's a place of unity, purpose, and peace.

Jerusalem in this psalm is more than a city. It's a vision of what the people of God can be when they are gathered in worship: secure, unified, joy-filled, and seeking peace.

The command to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” invites us into action. Biblical peace (shalom) isn't just the absence of conflict—it's the presence of wholeness, harmony, and flourishing. The psalmist prays for peace not only for the city's sake, but “for the sake of my brothers and companions,” and ultimately, “for the sake of the house of the Lord our God.”

Worship doesn't stop at personal joy. It pushes us outward. True worship stirs compassion. It fuels a longing for justice, reconciliation, and the flourishing of others.

What does this psalm tell you about what worship is supposed to lead to?

How does the call to peace challenge the way you think about your role in your community? Do you pray for peace for your community, city, friends, etc.?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 122 again slowly, this time in The Message. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

## ***Psalm 122***

<sup>1-2</sup> When they said, “Let’s go to the house of God,”  
my heart leaped for joy.  
And now we’re here, O Jerusalem,  
inside Jerusalem’s walls!

<sup>3-5</sup> Jerusalem, well-built city,  
built as a place for worship!  
The city to which the tribes ascend,  
all God’s tribes go up to worship,  
To give thanks to the name of God—  
this is what it means to be Israel.  
Thrones for righteous judgment  
are set there, famous David-thrones.

<sup>6-9</sup> Pray for Jerusalem’s peace!  
Prosperity to all you Jerusalem-lovers!  
Friendly insiders, get along!  
Hostile outsiders, keep your distance!  
For the sake of my family and friends,  
I say it again: live in peace!  
For the sake of the house of our God, God,  
I’ll do my very best for you.

***Reflect***

What stirred in you while reading this version of the psalm?

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How do you tend to think about what peace looks like?

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Where are you feeling a need to seek or protect peace in your life right now?

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***Respond***

Write your own short prayer asking God for peace in your home, community, or city.

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Where is God nudging you to “do your very best” for the sake of peace?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

What's a space, past or present, where you've felt a deep sense of belonging? What made it feel that way?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 122 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language). Before jumping into discussion, invite the group to sit with the psalm for a moment. Ask:

- What word or phrase stood out to you?
- Did anything stir your emotions or imagination?

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Joy in Worship**

- Verse 1 says, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'" What do you think stirred that gladness?
- What's your emotional relationship to gathering for worship these days? Joyful, tired, hopeful, skeptical?

### **A City of Connection**

- Jerusalem is described as a city "bound firmly together." What do you think that might mean symbolically?
- Have you ever been part of a community that felt "bound together" in a healthy way? What did that look like?

## **Peace That Spreads Outward**

- This psalm ends by praying for peace—for the city, for loved ones, and for the sake of God's house. What does it mean to pray for peace not just for yourself, but "for the sake of others"?
- Where in your world (family, neighborhood, workplace, church) do you long to see peace take root?

## **Worship That Changes You**

- How do you think worship—real, honest, communal worship—might shape the way we live the rest of the week?
- What would it look like if our spiritual gatherings didn't end at the door but rippled outward as peace-making and justice-seeking?

## ***Prayer Prompt:***

Set a calm tone and say something like:

- "This psalm invites us to move from joy to intercession, from belonging to building peace. Let's take a few minutes to pray beyond ourselves."

Then pray for peace for the relationships, situations, circumstances, and various places of belonging of the people in the group (city, community, country, school, work, family, etc.).

## ***Please Note:***

Not everyone feels joy when they think about church or community. If people express tension or disconnection, don't rush to fix it, just listen. Let the group imagine what peace could look like without needing to have it all figured out.

### **Psalm 123**

*A song of ascents.*

- <sup>1</sup> To you I lift up my eyes,  
O you who are enthroned in the heavens!
- <sup>2</sup> Behold, as the eyes of servants  
look to the hand of their master,  
as the eyes of a maidservant  
to the hand of her mistress,  
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,  
till he has mercy upon us.
- <sup>3</sup> Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us,  
for we have had more than enough of contempt.
- <sup>4</sup> Our soul has had more than enough  
of the scorn of those who are at ease,  
of the contempt of the proud.

Sunday • JUL 13

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 123**

**Notes:**

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 123 is a humble, aching prayer. After the joy of arriving in Jerusalem in Psalm 122, this psalm reminds us that even in sacred spaces, hardship and humiliation still find us.

The tone is quiet and submissive. The psalmist lifts their eyes not to the hills, but directly to God in heaven. The metaphor shifts to servants watching the hand of their master—eyes fixed, waiting, completely dependent. In ancient times, a servant watched the master's hand for direction, for provision, and for protection. One glance or gesture could mean everything.

The repeated plea, “Have mercy on us, O Lord,” comes from a place of exhaustion. The people have endured ridicule, contempt, and arrogance from those around them. This is not just personal pain. It's communal weariness.

And yet, they keep their eyes up. They wait. They look to God not as a last resort, but as their only hope.

What kind of posture does this psalm invite us to take before God?

How do you usually respond when you feel worn out or dismissed?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



## REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 123 again slowly, this time in The Message. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

### ***Psalm 123***

<sup>1-4</sup> I look to you, heaven-dwelling God,  
look up to you for help.  
Like servants, alert to their master's commands,  
like a maiden attending her lady,  
We're watching and waiting, holding our breath,  
awaiting your word of mercy.  
Mercy, God, mercy!  
We've been kicked around long enough,  
Kicked in the teeth by complacent rich men,  
kicked when we're down by arrogant brutes.

***Reflect***

What words or images stand out to you in this paraphrase?

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What's something in your life right now that you may be waiting on God for?

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How does this psalm give you permission to be honest about weariness?

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***Respond***

Write a short prayer that begins with “Lord, have mercy...”

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Take one practical step today to release control and entrust something specific to God. What might that be?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

Who or what did you used to rely on when you needed help or comfort as a child? How do you think that shaped you?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 123 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language).

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Observing the Text**

- What do you notice about the tone or posture of this prayer?
- The psalmist uses the image of a servant looking to their master's hand. What feelings or ideas does that picture bring up for you?
- Why do you think this prayer is directed to "You who are enthroned in the heavens"?

### **Connecting the Themes:**

- In verse 2, the psalmist says they're looking until God "shows mercy." What do you think it looks like to wait like that?
- Verse 3 says, "We have had more than enough of contempt." Have you ever had a season where you've felt worn out from life's pressures or people's treatment of you? Explain.
- What's the difference between waiting passively and looking to God expectantly? Which one better describes your current posture?

**Personal Reflection:**

- What do you usually do when you're in a season of waiting? How do you cope?
- How do you feel about the idea of dependence on God? Does it feel comforting, frustrating, freeing, difficult?
- What's one specific area of life where you feel like you're "looking to the Lord's hand" right now?

***Prayer Prompt:***

Say:

"This psalm speaks on behalf of a weary community, tired of being looked down on, dismissed, and mocked. Let's pray for the people who feel worn out right now."

Invite people to think of someone in their life (or in the world) who feels weary or overlooked.

Pray in pairs or as a whole group:

"Lord, have mercy on those who feel unseen. Lift their heads. Steady their feet. Restore their hope." Pray for the people who have come to mind.

End with a simple moment of gratitude:

"God, thank you that we are seen."

***Please Note:***

This psalm touches on weariness and waiting. If the group feels low-energy or quiet, that's okay, lean into it. Sometimes stillness, honest prayers, or simple sharing can go deeper than full discussion.

### Psalm 124

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> If it had not been the Lord who was on our side—  
let Israel now say—

<sup>2</sup> if it had not been the Lord who was on our side  
when people rose up against us,

<sup>3</sup> then they would have swallowed us up alive,  
when their anger was kindled against us;

<sup>4</sup> then the flood would have swept us away,  
the torrent would have gone over us;

<sup>5</sup> then over us would have gone  
the raging waters.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed be the Lord,  
who has not given us  
as prey to their teeth!

<sup>7</sup> We have escaped like a bird  
from the snare of the fowlers;  
the snare is broken,  
and we have escaped!

<sup>8</sup> Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.

Sunday • JUL 20

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 124**

**Notes:**

[illegible]



# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 124 is a song of rescue. It reflects on disaster averted—not because of luck, strength, or strategy, but because “the Lord was on our side.” This is communal memory turned into worship.

The psalm doesn’t pretend that danger isn’t real. In fact, the language is intense: swallowed alive, floodwaters sweeping over the soul, being trapped and torn. It names how close things came. And then it says: “But we escaped.” Why? Because God was there.

This psalm invites us to practice spiritual hindsight. Looking back, not with fear or bitterness, but with awe: We could’ve been crushed... but we weren’t. We could’ve drowned... but we didn’t.

Psalm 124 doesn’t explain suffering. It doesn’t give us neat answers for the why. But it names divine presence in the aftermath, and worship as the response.

It ends with a declaration: “Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” That’s not just theology, it’s identity. A people who have been rescued remember. And they become a people of gratitude and trust.

Think of a time when something could have gone very differently in your life. Where was God in that?

What does this psalm teach us about facing future threats or fears?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 124 again slowly, this time in *The Message*. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

## ***Psalm 124***

<sup>1-4</sup> If God hadn't been for us  
—all together now, Israel, sing out!—

If God hadn't been for us  
when everyone went against us,  
We would have been swallowed alive  
by their violent anger,  
Swept away by the flood of rage,  
drowned in the torrent;  
We would have lost our lives  
in the wild, raging water.

<sup>6</sup> Oh, blessed be God!  
He didn't go off and leave us.  
He didn't abandon us defenseless,  
helpless as a rabbit in a pack of snarling dogs.

<sup>7</sup> We've flown free from their fangs,  
free of their traps, free as a bird.  
Their grip is broken;  
we're free as a bird in flight.

<sup>8</sup> God's strong name is our help,  
the same God who made heaven and earth.

***Reflect***

What images from this version stood out to you most?

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What's something from your past that you now see differently because of God's help?

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What does it mean to declare “God is our help” even before you know the outcome?

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***Respond***

What did He spare you from, rescue you through, or carry you in?

Write your own version of verse 6, starting with the following:  
“Blessed be God—He...”

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

Has there ever been a time when, looking back, you thought: “That could have gone really badly”? What happened?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 124 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language).

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Naming the “Almosts”**

- This psalm names all the things that almost happened—being swallowed, swept away, trapped. What’s something in your life that felt like an “almost disaster”?
- Why do you think it matters that the psalmist talks about fear and threat so honestly?

### **Memory as Worship**

- What difference does it make to look back and say, “If it had not been the Lord...”?
- How can remembering God’s past help reshape how we face today’s fears?
- How do we keep these memories before us?

### **Present and Future Trust**

- The psalm ends by naming God as “our help.” What’s something in your life right now that still feels uncertain or risky?
- How might this psalm help us pray or live differently in that space?

### ***Prayer Prompt:***

Invite each person to write or speak a one-sentence prayer that begins:

“Blessed be God, He didn’t leave me when...”

Go around the group and let people share. Then read verse 8 together as a final declaration:

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

### ***Please Note:***

This psalm invites people to reflect on close calls, pain, or fear from the past, sometimes deeply personal stuff. As the leader, you don’t need to push for vulnerability, but you can gently model it.

If someone opens up, honor it with attentiveness, not advice. Sometimes a simple response like, “That’s a powerful story, thank you for sharing it,” can be more healing than a solution. Also, keep in mind that what feels like freedom to one person might still feel like part of the process to another. Let gratitude and honesty sit side by side.

### Psalm 125

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion,  
which cannot be moved, but abides forever.

<sup>2</sup> As the mountains surround Jerusalem,  
so the Lord surrounds his people,  
from this time forth and forevermore.

<sup>3</sup> For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest  
on the land allotted to the righteous,  
lest the righteous stretch out  
their hands to do wrong.

<sup>4</sup> Do good, O Lord, to those who are good,  
and to those who are upright in their hearts!

<sup>5</sup> But those who turn aside to their crooked ways  
the Lord will lead away with evildoers!  
Peace be upon Israel!

Sunday • JUL 27

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 125**

**Notes:**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

[illegible]

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 125 is a psalm about security, but not the kind the world usually offers. It doesn't promise ease or insulation from pain. Instead, it offers a deeper kind of stability: those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved.

This is a picture of spiritual rootedness. Mount Zion was a symbol of God's presence, permanence, and protection. Just as mountains surround Jerusalem, the psalm says, "so the Lord surrounds His people." Not just in good times, but "from this time forth and forevermore."

The psalm acknowledges that evil exists, and even that the "scepter of wickedness" may touch the land of the righteous, but it won't last forever. The psalmist prays for God to do good to those who are upright and also recognizes the reality that not everyone chooses the path of peace.

Psalm 125 reminds us that trust doesn't mean everything feels stable, it means God is stable. When life shifts, we are still surrounded.

What does it mean to be spiritually unshakable—even when life feels unstable?

Where in your life do you need to remember that God surrounds you?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 125 again slowly, this time in The Message. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

## ***Psalm 125***

<sup>1-5</sup> Those who trust in God  
are like Zion Mountain:  
Nothing can move it, a rock-solid mountain  
you can always depend on.  
Mountains encircle Jerusalem,  
and God encircles his people—  
always has and always will.  
The fist of the wicked  
will never violate  
What is due the righteous,  
provoking wrongful violence.  
Be good to your good people, God,  
to those whose hearts are right!  
God will round up the backsliders,  
corral them with the incorrigibles.  
Peace over Israel!

**Reflect**

What line or image from this version of the psalm hit you most?

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Imagine standing on a mountain—solid, unmoving, grounded. What would it feel like to be that steady in your trust in God?

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Where in your life do you feel like things are shifting or uncertain? How does it change your mindset to think of God surrounding you like mountains?

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***Respond***

Draw a quick sketch or create a mental picture of “Mount Zion” with mountains surrounding it. Put a small dot in the center and write your name there. What would it mean to live from the center of that protected space this week?

Write a few one-sentence prayers of trust:

"God, even if \_\_\_\_\_, I will still trust You."

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

What's something that used to scare you, but now, with time or perspective, doesn't shake you anymore?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 125 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language). Invite group members to close their eyes and picture the imagery: mountains, surrounding presence, steady ground.

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Trust That Holds**

- The psalm begins with, "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion." What does that image say about the kind of faith God invites us into?
- What's something you're currently walking through that feels shaky?

### **Surrounded by God**

- How does it change your perspective to think about God surrounding you like mountains?
- Have there been moments where you felt God's presence more clearly in the middle of difficulty?

### **Evil Doesn't Get the Final Word**

- Verse 3 acknowledges that the "scepter of wickedness" may linger—but not forever. What does it mean to live with hope even when things still feel unfair or unresolved?
- Where do you long for God to bring lasting peace or justice?

### ***Prayer Prompt:***

Ask each person to silently reflect:

What's one place in your life where you want to become more rooted in trust?

Then go around and share sentence prayers that start like this:

"God, even when \_\_\_\_\_, help me to trust You."

Close by reading verse 2 together:

"As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore."

### ***Please Note:***

This psalm is simple but powerful—don't rush past the images. Invite people to sit with the metaphor of being surrounded. If conversation lags, try drawing it out with a practical prompt like: "Where do you feel most 'exposed' right now? What would it look like to feel surrounded instead?"

### Psalm 126

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

<sup>2</sup> 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.”

<sup>3</sup> The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are glad.

<sup>4</sup> Restore our fortunes, O Lord,  
like streams in the Negeb!

<sup>5</sup> Those who sow in tears  
shall reap with shouts of joy!

<sup>6</sup> He who goes out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
bringing his sheaves with him.

Sunday • AUG 3

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 126**

**Notes:**

[illegible]



# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

[illegible]

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 126 is a song for the in-between. It remembers a time when God brought restoration and joy, “We were like those who dream,” but it also acknowledges the present reality of tears, longing, and waiting. Joy has come before, but it hasn’t fully arrived yet.

This psalm shows that worship can hold memory and hope at the same time. The community sings about God’s past faithfulness and prays for it to happen again: “Restore our fortunes, O Lord.” They believe that sorrow is not the final word.

The central image is of sowing in tears and reaping in joy. It’s agricultural and emotional. Farmers plant seeds with aching backs and weathered hands, trusting that something will grow later. The psalmist says the same is true for us: when we sow faith, trust, or obedience in hard seasons, God promises a harvest.

This is a psalm for anyone who is trying to keep going, who has tasted joy in the past and is holding out for it to come again.

What are some “harvests” you’ve seen in your life—joys that came after long seasons of difficulty?

What's something you're sowing now that you're praying will become joy later?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 126 again slowly, this time in *The Message*. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

### ***Psalm 126***

<sup>1-3</sup> It seemed like a dream, too good to be true,  
when God returned Zion's exiles.

We laughed, we sang,  
we couldn't believe our good fortune.

We were the talk of the nations—  
“God was wonderful to them!”

God was wonderful to us;  
we are one happy people.

<sup>4-6</sup> And now, God, do it again—  
bring rains to our drought-stricken lives  
So those who planted their crops in despair  
will shout “Yes!” at the harvest,  
So those who went off with heavy hearts  
will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing.

**Reflect**

The psalm opens with surprise: “It seemed like a dream.” Have you ever experienced a moment so good—or so redemptive—it didn’t feel real at first? What was that like?

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What does “sowing in tears” mean to you right now? Are there areas of your life where you’re putting in work or having faith with no guarantee of when or how it will pay off?

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This psalm turns memory into hope. How can remembering God’s past goodness help you stay anchored in the present?

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***Respond***

Write a short, personal “do it again” prayer. Think of something good God has done for you (recent or long ago) and ask Him to do it again—whether in your life, your community, or someone you love.

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Reach out to someone who is in a “sowing” season. Send a text, write a note, or simply tell them: “I see you. I’m praying your tears turn into joy.”



# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

Have you ever had a moment when you were surprised by joy? What changed?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 126 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language). Invite the group to listen for contrasts—joy and sorrow, memory and hope, laughter and tears.

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Remembering Joy**

- The psalmist says, “We were like those who dream.” Why do you think joy can feel unbelievable at times?
- How can remembering times of joy help you trust God in times of sorrow?

### **Living in the In-Between**

- The psalm shifts in verse 4: “Restore our fortunes, O Lord.” What does it feel like to be between past joy and current need?
- Why do you think God invites us to be honest about our longing—not just our gratitude?

### **Sowing in Tears**

- The psalm talks about those who sow in tears and reap with shouts of joy. What does “sowing in tears” look like in real life?
- What makes it hard to trust that joy will come again when we’re in a hard season?

- How do you think our culture (or even church culture) treats sadness or waiting? How does this psalm challenge that?

### **Hope That Moves Us**

- What does it look like to live today with confidence that joy will return—even if we don't know when?
- How might this psalm shape the way we encourage others who are in their own season of drought, sowing, or waiting?

### ***Prayer Prompt:***

As a group, take time to pray for these two things:

- Gratitude – thank God for specific ways He has brought restoration or joy in the past.
- Courage – for those who are sowing in tears right now, to keep going.

### ***Please Note:***

This psalm touches joy and sorrow in the same breath. Give space for both. If someone shares a joy, celebrate it. If someone shares a sorrow, honor it. Don't rush anyone to move too quickly from one to the other—this week is about holding both together.

### Psalm 127

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.

<sup>4</sup> Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
are the children of one's youth.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

Sunday • AUG 10

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 127**

**Notes:**

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 127 is both a wisdom psalm and a warning: you can work hard and achieve a lot, yet still miss what truly matters. The message isn't "don't work," but instead is warning us not to work as if God doesn't matter. Whether you're building a house, guarding a city, or raising a family, the psalm says: unless the Lord is in it, it's empty.

There's a kind of restlessness many of us live in—staying up late, rising early, grinding harder. But this psalm flips the script: God gives sleep to those He loves. Not as a reward for perfection, but as a gift to the ones who know they're not in control.

The second half shifts to children—not just as a comment on parenting, but as a reminder that legacy isn't about what we build with our hands, but what we pour into people. In a culture obsessed with achievement, Psalm 127 invites us back to dependence, rest, and presence.

It's not about stopping work—it's about reordering your life so God is the one building it.

What's something in your life right now that you're "building"? Do you feel like you're doing it with God, or just for Him?

Where do you feel most tempted to overwork, overcontrol, or overfunction?

[illegible]



# REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 127 again slowly, this time in The Message. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

## ***Psalm 127***

<sup>1-2</sup> If God doesn't build the house,  
the builders only build shacks.  
If God doesn't guard the city,  
the night watchman might as well nap.  
It's useless to rise early and go to bed late,  
and work your worried fingers to the bone.  
Don't you know he enjoys  
giving rest to those he loves?

<sup>3-5</sup> Don't you see that children are God's best gift?  
the fruit of the womb his generous legacy?  
Like a warrior's fistful of arrows  
are the children of a vigorous youth.  
Oh, how blessed are you parents,  
with your quivers full of children!  
Your enemies don't stand a chance against you;  
you'll sweep them right off your doorstep.

***Reflect***

What line stood out to you in this translation? Why?

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Does your daily rhythm reflect trust in God—or pressure to hold everything together yourself?

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How have you seen God build or guard something in your life in a way you couldn't have done on your own?

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Who has God placed in your life as part of your legacy—biologically, spiritually, or relationally?

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***Respond***

Choose one part of your life that feels over-busy or under-trusting. Pray a simple prayer: “God, I want You to build this, not just me.”

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Go to bed early once this week as a spiritual act—not laziness, but obedience. Receive rest as a gift, not something you earn.

Write a short note of encouragement to someone younger (in age or faith). Remind them they’re part of what matters most.

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

What's something you've worked really hard on—only to realize it wasn't as important as you thought?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 127 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language). Then ask someone else to read it again slowly, letting the group notice any shifts or surprises.

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Working Without God**

- Verse 1 repeats “unless the Lord...” What stands out to you about that phrase?
- Have you ever felt like you were building or protecting something, but doing it without God?

### **Rethinking Rest**

- Verse 2 challenges the idea that hustle is always good. What does “rest” look like in your life? Is it something you resist, need more of, or are learning to receive?
- What kind of rest does this psalm seem to be talking about? Physical, spiritual, emotional, or something else?

### **Legacy and Presence**

- The second half of the psalm feels like a shift. Why do you think the writer pairs “building a house” with raising children or investing in people?
- Who are you currently pouring into? Who are you helping grow?

## **Trusting the Builder**

- What would it look like to trust God more with your work, your family, or your future?
- If you were to stop striving in one area this week and trust God instead, what would change?

### ***Prayer Prompt:***

As a group, spend time praying for these three areas:

- Work – that God would be at the center of what each person is building
- Rest – that each person would receive deep rest as a gift, not a reward
- Legacy – that your group would be people who invest in what lasts and trust God with the outcome

Consider inviting people to share short one-line requests in each of these categories before praying together.

### ***Please Note:***

This psalm may feel “practical,” but it goes deep fast—into control, exhaustion, and legacy. If the group begins opening up about burnout or striving, let that breathe. You don’t need to push for answers. Sometimes the best gift is helping people name where they’re tired and reminding them they don’t have to carry it alone.

### **Psalm 128**

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,  
who walks in his ways!

<sup>2</sup> You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;  
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.

<sup>3</sup> Your wife will be like a fruitful vine  
within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots  
around your table.

<sup>4</sup> Behold, thus shall the man be blessed  
who fears the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord bless you from Zion!  
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem  
all the days of your life!

<sup>6</sup> May you see your children's children!  
Peace be upon Israel!

Sunday • AUG 17

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 128**

**Notes:**

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 128 is a blessing song—a vision of a life that is grounded, fruitful, and at peace. It describes what it looks like when someone “fears the Lord and walks in His ways.” But the blessing isn’t just about the individual. It flows outward, to family, to community, to future generations.

The images are simple and earthy: fruitful work, a thriving household, flourishing children. In ancient Israel, these were signs of favor. But the deeper truth is that this kind of blessing still matters, though it may look different for each person. A healthy home. Meaningful labor. Generational strength. Peace in your neighborhood.

In our context today, this psalm invites us to imagine what “shalom” could look like across generations and communities. What does it mean for your home to be a place of rooted joy? For your children, or spiritual children, to thrive? For your city to experience peace?

Psalm 128 is not a formula, but a vision. It calls us to walk with God and trust that He brings blessing that goes beyond us.

What does “fearing the Lord” and “walking in His ways” mean to you right now—not in theory, but practically?

This psalm talks about blessing that reaches the next generation. Who are the people, family or otherwise, you hope your life will impact?

[illegible]

## REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 128 again slowly, this time in The Message. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

### ***Psalm 128***

<sup>1-2</sup> All you who fear God, how blessed you are!  
how happily you walk on his smooth straight road!  
You worked hard and deserve all you've got coming.  
Enjoy the blessing! Revel in the goodness!

<sup>3</sup> Your wife will bear children as a vine bears grapes,  
your household lush as a vineyard,  
The children around your table  
as fresh and promising as young olive shoots.

<sup>4</sup> Stand in awe of God's Yes.  
Oh, how he blesses the one who fears God!

<sup>5-6</sup> Enjoy the good life in Jerusalem  
every day of your life.  
And enjoy your grandchildren.  
Peace to Israel!

**Reflect**

What lines from this paraphrase caught your attention?

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What does a “lush” or “flourishing” life mean to you?

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If you think about different generations (your parents, your children, your mentors, or those you lead), how do you see God working across those relationships?

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How might this psalm speak differently to someone who's older vs. someone just starting out in faith or life?

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***Respond***

Write down one specific way you want to walk in God’s ways this week—not just belief, but behavior.

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Choose one person from a generation different than yours (older or younger) and ask them: What does a “blessed life” mean to you? Listen deeply.



# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

Who is someone, older or younger, whose faith has deeply influenced your life? What did they model for you?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 128 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language). Let the group hear the generational echo in the text.

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Walking in God's Ways**

- Verse 1 connects reverence and obedience: “fear the Lord” and “walk in His ways.” What’s the difference between believing in God and walking in His ways?
- Where do you think God is currently inviting you into greater trust or obedience?

### **A Flourishing Life**

- The psalm describes fruitful labor, thriving family, and joy around the table. What does “flourishing” look like in your season of life right now?
- Are there ways different generations might define or experience “blessing” differently? How might culture or context shape that too?

### **Blessing Beyond Us**

- Verse 6 talks about seeing your children’s children. What kind of legacy—spiritual or otherwise—are you hoping to pass down?
- How do you think a community like ours can live in a way that blesses future generations, not just our own?

- This psalm ends with “Peace be upon Israel.” What does it look like to seek peace—not just personal peace, but peace for your people, your city, or across cultural lines?

### ***Prayer Prompt:***

As a group, pray across generations:

- Pray for those coming after you—whether children, students, or younger believers.
- Pray for those who came before you—thanking God for spiritual parents, mentors, or ancestors in the faith.
- Pray for your city or community—that God’s peace would be real across families, neighborhoods, and generations.

You might invite different generations in the group to take turns leading short, simple prayers in each category.

### ***Please Note:***

This is a great week to draw out voices across generations. If your group includes both elders and young adults, help them ask and listen to one another. Don’t force agreement, just make space. People may define “blessing” or “peace” differently depending on their stage of life or lived experience, and that diversity is a gift.

### Psalm 129

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> “Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth”—  
let Israel now say—

<sup>2</sup> “Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth,  
yet they have not prevailed against me.

<sup>3</sup> The plowers plowed upon my back;  
they made long their furrows.”

<sup>4</sup> The Lord is righteous;  
he has cut the cords of the wicked.

<sup>5</sup> May all who hate Zion  
be put to shame and turned backward!

<sup>6</sup> Let them be like the grass on the housetops,  
which withers before it grows up,

<sup>7</sup> with which the reaper does not fill his hand  
nor the binder of sheaves his arms,

<sup>8</sup> nor do those who pass by say,  
“The blessing of the Lord be upon you!  
We bless you in the name of the Lord!”

Sunday • AUG 24

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 129**

**Notes:**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 129 is a survival psalm, a communal cry that says, “They’ve attacked us from the beginning... but they haven’t won.”

The language is intense: back plowed like a field, deep wounds from the enemy. This isn’t abstract pain. It’s historical, generational, and specific. But the psalm doesn’t stay in the place of harm. It moves to resistance: “But they have not prevailed.”

In a culture that sometimes rushes to healing without naming harm, Psalm 129 gives us space to say the hard thing: We’ve been wounded. But also: We’re still here.

This psalm has special resonance for communities that have endured oppression—whether it’s the story of Israel under foreign rule, Black Americans enduring racial injustice, or people in families or churches who have experienced harm but chosen to stand in truth and hope. It’s not about bitterness, it’s about declaring that injustice doesn’t have the last word.

The psalm ends not with personal vengeance, but a prayer that wickedness would wither, that oppression would not flourish anymore. That’s justice. That’s holy resistance.

The psalmist says, “Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth.” What’s one form of hardship or opposition you’ve carried for a long time?

What’s the difference between naming pain and being defined by it?

Have you seen or experienced resilience in your family, community, or cultural story? What does that legacy of endurance mean to you?

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## REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 129 again slowly, this time in *The Message*. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

### ***Psalm 129***

<sup>1-4</sup> “They’ve kicked me around ever since I was young”

—this is how Israel tells it—

“They’ve kicked me around ever since I was young,

but they never could keep me down.

Their plowmen plowed long furrows

up and down my back;

But God wouldn’t put up with it,

he sticks with us.

Then God ripped the harnesses

of the evil plowmen to shreds.”

<sup>5-8</sup> Oh, let all those who hate Zion

grovel in humiliation;

Let them be like grass in shallow ground

that withers before the harvest,

Before the farmhands can gather it in,

the harvesters get in the crop,

Before the neighbors have a chance to call out,

“Congratulations on your wonderful crop!

We bless you in God’s name!”

**Reflect**

What phrase from this version of the psalm stands out to you the most?

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Can you think of a time in your life, or your community's story, where you were "kicked around but never kept down"?

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Where do you long to see God dismantle systems or cycles of harm, personally or in the world?

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***Respond***

Think of a person or group in your life who has endured hardship. Reach out with encouragement: “I see your resilience. I see God in it.”

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Ask God: Where do You want to cut cords this week? (cords of shame, fear, addiction, people-pleasing, injustice, silence, etc.). Write down what comes to mind and pray into it.

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

Can you think of a time in your life when you went through something difficult? Whether you came out stronger or are still carrying the wounds, how did that experience shape you?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 129 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language).

Then ask the group: What's one word or phrase that grabbed your attention?

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Personal and Lasting Pain**

- The psalmist says, "Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth." What kinds of pain or hardship tend to linger in people's lives or stories?
- Have you ever felt like your life was being "plowed"? Dug through or scarred by something that wasn't fair?

### **Resilience and God's Justice**

- Verse 2 shifts with the words: "yet they have not prevailed." How do those words sit with you? Where have you seen that kind of quiet strength in your own life or someone else's?
- Verse 4 says God "cut the cords of the wicked." What might that look like in a modern context—personally, socially, or spiritually?

### **Naming What Should Not Thrive**

- Verses 5–8 pray that evil won't flourish. Why do you think that kind of prayer is needed, not avoided?

- Is there anything in your world, personal or societal, you've been afraid to name as wrong? What would it mean to speak it and pray about it?

### **Lived Stories Across Generations**

- This psalm is a community speaking, not one person. What stories of survival or resistance do you know from your family, generation, or racial background?
- What can we learn by hearing one another's pain and resilience—especially across generational or cultural lines?

### ***Prayer Prompt:***

As a group, spend time praying with three themes in mind:

- Truth – that hidden or long-carried pain would be named honestly
- Freedom – that God would “cut the cords” of anything binding people in shame, fear, or injustice
- Endurance – that you and others would continue to stand in faith, even with scars

### ***Please Note:***

This psalm is raw. It might stir strong emotions, especially if people carry trauma, racial pain, or long-term struggles. Create space for lament without needing to explain it away. If things go deep, it's okay to pause the plan and pray. Let the group know: honesty is holy.

### **Psalm 130**

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!

<sup>2</sup> O Lord, hear my voice!

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

<sup>3</sup> If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,  
O Lord, who could stand?

<sup>4</sup> But with you there is forgiveness,  
that you may be feared.

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

<sup>6</sup> my soul waits for the Lord  
more than watchmen for the morning,  
more than watchmen for the morning.

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

<sup>8</sup> And he will redeem Israel  
from all his iniquities.

Sunday • AUG 31

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 130**

**Notes:**

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalms 130 is one of the most powerful examples of a soul laid bare before God. It begins in the depths—not of disaster, but of inner desperation: “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.”

This is a cry for mercy, not because the psalmist doubts God’s power, but because they trust His character. There’s no pretending here. No performance. Just raw need and deep hope.

The psalmist doesn’t wallow in guilt. They name sin, but they also wait...for redemption, for change, for God’s response. Waiting here isn’t passive; it’s active hope. “I wait for the Lord... more than watchmen for the morning.” That’s the image of someone scanning the horizon for the first light, confident it will come.

This psalm invites us to move beyond guilt-driven religion toward grace-shaped honesty. Whether your “depths” come from sin, sorrow, or silence, God meets you there. And He doesn’t leave you there.

It ends with collective hope: “He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” Not just me, but us. Not just now, but forever.

What “depths” have you found yourself crying out from, recently or in the past?

How do you tend to respond when you know you've fallen short (avoidance, self-punishment, confession, or something else)?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 130 again slowly, this time in The Message. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

### ***Psalm 130***

<sup>1-2</sup> Help, God—I've hit rock bottom!

Master, hear my cry for help!

Listen hard! Open your ears!

Listen to my cries for mercy.

<sup>3-4</sup> If you, God, kept records on wrongdoings,  
who would stand a chance?

As it turns out, forgiveness is your habit,  
and that's why you're worshiped.

<sup>5-6</sup> I pray to God—my life a prayer—  
and wait for what he'll say and do.

My life's on the line before God, my Lord,  
waiting and watching till morning,  
waiting and watching till morning.

<sup>7-8</sup> O Israel, wait and watch for God—  
with God's arrival comes love,  
with God's arrival comes generous redemption.

No doubt about it—he'll redeem Israel,  
buy back Israel from captivity to sin.

**Reflect**

What image(s) from this version of the psalm stood out to you?  
Examples: “bottom falling out,” “life a prayer,” “waiting till morning.”

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Can you relate to the tension between deep personal failure and deep trust in God’s mercy?

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What does it mean to wait with hope, rather than despair?

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***Respond***

Write a short prayer that begins: “Out of the depths, Lord, I cry to You about...” Fill in whatever’s most real today.

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Choose a moment this week to be still and silent—no music, no phone—just listening.

Ask God: What do You want to say to me in the waiting?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

When you're overwhelmed, what do you tend to do first—shut down, power through, ask for help, or something else?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 130 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language).

Take 30 seconds of quiet before discussion. Ask:  
What image or line stood out to you?

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Starting from the Depths**

- The psalm begins, "Out of the depths I cry to you." What does it mean to bring your lowest places to God?
- Is it hard or easy for you to be honest with God about your need or weakness? Why?

### **Mercy That Changes Us**

- Verses 3–4 say that with God there is forgiveness, "that He may be feared." What does that tell us about how grace and reverence go together?
- Have you ever experienced God's mercy in a way that shifted how you see Him, or yourself?

### **Waiting Like a Watchman**

- The psalmist says, "I wait for the Lord... like a watchman for the morning." What would it look like to wait on God in your life right now, with expectation instead of anxiety?
- Why do you think waiting is so often a key part of spiritual growth?

## **Hope That's Bigger Than Me**

- The psalm ends with a wide view: "He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities." How does it change things when you remember God's work isn't just personal, but communal?
- Who's someone you know who needs hope right now? How can you help them through their situation?

### ***Prayer Prompt:***

As a group, take time to pray for:

- Those feeling stuck in the depths – emotionally, spiritually, or circumstantially
- The courage to wait on God – without rushing ahead or giving up
- A renewal of hope – for yourselves, your relationships, and your community

You can invite group members to pray short, simple prayers aloud, or begin with a few moments of silence and have one person close.

### ***Please Note:***

This psalm gives permission to be real about sin, struggle, and waiting. If the group goes quiet, let it. Not all depth needs to be filled with words. Pay attention to who might need encouragement after group ends.



## Week Thirteen

### **Psalm 131**

*A song of ascents.*

- <sup>1</sup> O Lord, my heart is not lifted up;  
my eyes are not raised too high;  
I do not occupy myself with things  
too great and too marvelous for me.
- <sup>2</sup> But I have calmed and quieted my soul,  
like a weaned child with its mother;  
like a weaned child is my soul within me.
- <sup>3</sup> O Israel, hope in the Lord  
from this time forth and forevermore.

Sunday • SEP 7

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 131**

**Notes:**

[illegible]

# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 131 is short, but it's grown-up. It's not a song of conquest or struggle. It's the sound of someone who's done striving. Someone who's learned how to quiet the noise inside.

The psalm begins with humility: "My heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high." That's not self-hate. It's someone who's stopped chasing status, control, or comparison. They've traded performance for peace.

Then comes the core image: "I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother." That's not the cry of a baby demanding something, it's the rest of a child simply enjoying presence. Trust without tension.

In a world that pushes us to do more, fix more, prove more, Psalm 131 is resistance. A holy exhale. A reminder that maturity isn't always more, it's knowing when to be still.

The psalm ends with an invitation: "Hope in the Lord, from this time forth and forevermore." That's not a passive hope. It's settled. Rooted. Enduring.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



## REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 131 again slowly, this time in The Message. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

### ***Psalm 131***

<sup>1</sup> God, I'm not trying to rule the roost,  
I don't want to be king of the mountain.  
I haven't meddled where I have no business  
or fantasized grandiose plans.

<sup>2</sup> I've kept my feet on the ground,  
I've cultivated a quiet heart.  
Like a baby content in its mother's arms,  
my soul is a baby content.

<sup>3</sup> Wait, Israel, for God. Wait with hope.  
Hope now; hope always!

***Reflect***

What phrase or image in this paraphrase stands out to you?

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Where in your life are you tempted to overreach, overthink, or overmanage?

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What would it mean to “cultivate a quiet heart” this week?

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***Respond***

Set aside five minutes this week to sit in silence—no phone, no words. Just breathe and invite God to quiet your soul.

Identify one situation this week where you can release control or let go of striving. Pray for the strength to choose peace over pressure.

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

What's something you used to think meant "maturity," but now you see it differently?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 131 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language).

Then sit in 60 seconds of silence before starting the discussion.

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Humility and Presence**

- Verse 1 says, "My heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high." What does healthy humility look like to you?
- Have you ever found freedom in stepping back from something—like proving yourself, being in control, or chasing a goal?

### **Quieting the Soul**

- What's one area in your life right now that feels restless or unquiet?
- The psalmist says they've "calmed and quieted" their soul. What helps you move from anxious to anchored?

### **Maturity in Contentment**

- What does the image of a weaned child communicate about trust and emotional maturity?
- How is contentment different from complacency? Where do you see that tension in your own life?

## **A Hope that Waits**

- Verse 3 invites the whole community to wait and hope. Why do you think those two ideas, waiting and hoping, so often go together?
- How might your life look different this week if you led with calm confidence instead of pressure or urgency?

### ***Prayer Prompt:***

As a group, pray for:

- Quiet hearts – in the face of stress, anxiety, or internal noise
- Contentment – in the season each person is currently walking through

Invite anyone to share a short prayer or prayer request, or simply rest in a moment of collective stillness before someone closes in prayer.

### ***Please Note:***

Some people struggle with stillness—either because of anxiety, trauma, or a sense that stillness = unproductive. Gently remind the group that quiet is not absence. It's space for presence. If your group normally talks a lot, see what happens when you build in some extra pause.

## Week Fourteen

### Psalm 132

*A song of ascents.*

- <sup>1</sup> Remember, O Lord, in David's favor,  
all the hardships he endured,  
<sup>2</sup> how he swore to the Lord  
and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,  
<sup>3</sup> "I will not enter my house  
or get into my bed,  
<sup>4</sup> I will not give sleep to my eyes  
or slumber to my eyelids,  
<sup>5</sup> until I find a place for the Lord,  
a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."
- <sup>6</sup> Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah;  
we found it in the fields of Jaar.  
<sup>7</sup> "Let us go to his dwelling place;  
let us worship at his footstool!"
- <sup>8</sup> Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place,  
you and the ark of your might.  
<sup>9</sup> Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,  
and let your saints shout for joy.  
<sup>10</sup> For the sake of your servant David,  
do not turn away the face of your anointed one.
- <sup>11</sup> The Lord swore to David a sure oath  
from which he will not turn back:  
"One of the sons of your body  
I will set on your throne.  
<sup>12</sup> If your sons keep my covenant  
and my testimonies that I shall teach them,  
their sons also forever  
shall sit on your throne."
- <sup>13</sup> For the Lord has chosen Zion;  
he has desired it for his dwelling place:  
<sup>14</sup> "This is my resting place forever;  
here I will dwell, for I have desired it.  
<sup>15</sup> I will abundantly bless her provisions;  
I will satisfy her poor with bread.  
<sup>16</sup> Her priests I will clothe with salvation,  
and her saints will shout for joy.  
<sup>17</sup> There I will make a horn to sprout for David;  
I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.  
<sup>18</sup> His enemies I will clothe with shame,  
but on him his crown will shine."

Sunday • SEP 14

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 132**

**Notes:**

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# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

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# DEVOTIONAL

Psalms 132 is a story in two halves. The first is about our longing for God, the second is about God's longing to dwell with us.

It begins by remembering King David's deep desire to find a permanent home for the ark of the covenant. He couldn't rest knowing the visible sign of God's presence had no resting place. This wasn't about status or architecture. It was about honoring God's nearness, about making room for God to dwell at the center of life, not the edge of it.

But the second half of the psalm shifts: "The Lord swore to David a sure oath... I will dwell in Zion forever." The focus moves from what David did for God to what God promised His people. The story isn't just about David's passion, it's about God's covenant faithfulness. God wants to be with His people. He chooses to dwell, to bless, to clothe with salvation, and to raise up leaders in His timing.

Psalms 132 reminds us: our acts of devotion matter, but they don't hold the whole story. We're part of something much larger. God was working before us, and He'll continue long after us. What He begins, He finishes.

This is a psalm for those who are building something, waiting for God to show up, or praying for His presence to make a place come alive again. It's a reminder that God's presence is not just a personal experience—it's a promise to a people. A resting place for God becomes a radiant place for us.

How does it shift your mindset to remember that God's faithfulness doesn't depend on your striving? What's freeing or even frustrating about that?

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, text, or other markings on the page.

## REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 132 again slowly, this time in The Message. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

### ***Psalm 132***

- <sup>1-5</sup> O God, remember David,  
remember all his troubles!  
And remember how he promised God,  
made a vow to the Strong God of Jacob,  
“I’m not going home,  
and I’m not going to bed,  
I’m not going to sleep,  
not even take time to rest,  
Until I find a home for God,  
a house for the Strong God of Jacob.”
- <sup>6-7</sup> Remember how we got the news in Ephrathah,  
learned all about it at Jaar Meadows?  
We shouted, “Let’s go to the shrine dedication!  
Let’s worship at God’s own footstool!”
- <sup>8-10</sup> Up, God, enjoy your new place of quiet repose,  
you and your mighty covenant ark;  
Get your priests all dressed up in justice;  
prompt your worshipers to sing this prayer:  
“Honor your servant David;  
don’t disdain your anointed one.”
- <sup>11-18</sup> God gave David his word,  
he won’t back out on this promise:

“One of your sons  
I will set on your throne;  
If your sons stay true to my Covenant  
and learn to live the way I teach them,  
Their sons will continue the line—  
always a son to sit on your throne.  
Yes—I, God, chose Zion,  
the place I wanted for my shrine;  
This will always be my home;  
this is what I want, and I’m here for good.  
I’ll shower blessings on the pilgrims who come here,  
and give supper to those who arrive hungry;  
I’ll dress my priests in salvation clothes;  
the holy people will sing their hearts out!  
Oh, I’ll make the place radiant for David!  
I’ll fill it with light for my anointed!  
I’ll dress his enemies in dirty rags,  
but I’ll make his crown sparkle with splendor.”

## ***Reflect***

What part of this paraphrase catches your attention or stirs your imagination?

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Where in your life do you feel the tension between working for God and trusting God?

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What’s one area where you long for God’s presence to “make the place radiant”?

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***Respond***

Write a prayer of invitation this week: “God, dwell in...” (fill in a part of your life or space where you long for His presence to be known).

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Spend time praying for someone younger than you—that they would experience God’s promises firsthand.

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

What's something in your life that you've "made room for" because it mattered to you?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 132 slowly and out loud. This is a longer psalm—consider having two people split the reading, or breaking it into two parts: verses 1–10 and 11–18. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language).

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Desire and Devotion**

- In verses 1–5, David is restless until he finds a dwelling place for God. What does that kind of longing look like in real life today?
- What might it look like to "make space" for God in your home, your time, or your priorities?

### **From Vow to Promise**

- How does the psalm shift in verse 11? What's the difference between David's vow and God's promise?
- When have you needed to trust in God's long-term faithfulness, especially when your own efforts weren't enough?

### **Presence That Radiates**

- God says, "This is My resting place forever... I'll make the place radiant with My presence." Where do you long to see that kind of radiance (in your family, your church, your city)?
- What's one way you've experienced God's presence as something that brings joy, peace, or light?

## **Legacy That Endures**

- This psalm is full of generational language—sons, thrones, priesthood. How are you participating in a spiritual legacy?
- What would it look like for our group to invest in what will outlast us?

## ***Prayer Prompt:***

As a group, take time to pray for:

- A deeper desire for God's presence: in your own life and in the community
- Faith to trust God's long-term promises: especially in things you can't control
- Spiritual legacy: that what you're building together will bless future generations

You might invite a few people from different life stages to pray, or write short prayers and read them aloud.

## ***Please Note:***

Psalm 132 can feel like a mix of striving and waiting. If the group leans heavily into what they are doing for God, gently re-center the conversation on what God promises to do for us. His presence doesn't have to be earned...it's given.

### ***Psalm 133***

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> Behold, how good and pleasant it is  
when brothers dwell in unity!

<sup>2</sup> It is like the precious oil on the head,  
running down on the beard,  
on the beard of Aaron,  
running down on the collar of his robes!

<sup>3</sup> It is like the dew of Hermon,  
which falls on the mountains of Zion!

For there the Lord has commanded the blessing,  
life forevermore.

Sunday • SEP 21

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 133**

**Notes:**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

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# DEVOTIONAL

Psalm 133 is short, but it overflows. It's not packed with instruction. It's packed with imagery. And the message is clear: when God's people live together in unity, something sacred happens.

The psalm opens with a vision: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" Not just working side by side or being in the same room, but truly dwelling—settling in, staying, sharing life.

The images that follow are rich with meaning. First: oil running down Aaron's beard and onto his robe. That sounds strange to modern ears, but it's an image of anointing, blessing, and overflow. When God's people live in unity, His presence doesn't just visit—it covers. It soaks in.

Then: dew on Mount Zion. In a dry land, dew was a symbol of refreshing, life, and renewal. Unity, the psalm says, creates an atmosphere where God's people flourish.

Unity doesn't mean uniformity. It doesn't mean no conflict or no difference. But it does mean choosing honor, peace, and shared purpose over division and pride. And in that space, God commands a blessing—life forevermore.

What makes true unity hard to maintain in a diverse or close-knit group of people?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



## REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 133 again slowly, this time in The Message. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

### ***Psalm 133***

<sup>1-3</sup> How wonderful, how beautiful,  
when brothers and sisters get along!  
It's like costly anointing oil  
flowing down head and beard,  
Flowing down Aaron's beard,  
flowing down the collar of his priestly robes.  
It's like the dew on Mount Hermon  
flowing down the slopes of Zion.  
Yes, that's where God commands the blessing,  
ordains eternal life.

**Reflect**

What word or phrase sticks with you from this poetic paraphrase?

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How do you personally contribute to peace or disunity in the spaces you occupy?

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Where do you long to see God’s blessing flow in your relationships or community?

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***Respond***

Ask God this question in prayer: “Where am I being invited to choose unity over pride, comfort, or silence?” Write down what comes to mind.

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Consider planning or participating in something that intentionally brings people together across lines of difference—age, background, story, etc.

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

When have you experienced a moment of genuine unity in a group, at home, in church, at work, or elsewhere? What made it meaningful?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 133 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language). Invite a short moment of silence.

Ask: What in these verses stands out?

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **What Unity Really Means**

- The psalm uses the word “dwell”—not “agree” or “coexist.” What do you think is the difference?
- Why do you think God values unity so much that He commands blessing where it exists?

### **The Overflow of Anointing**

- The image of oil flowing down Aaron’s beard is strange but powerful. What do you think it represents?
- Have you ever felt like unity in a group made room for God’s presence in a tangible way?

### **The Refreshment of Dew**

- The dew imagery suggests renewal. How has living in harmony with others brought life to your soul?
- What relationships or communities in your life need this kind of refreshing?

## **Practicing Unity in Real Life**

- What's one way you can actively contribute to unity in your family, friendships, or church right now?
- How can your group be a place where different stories, backgrounds, and perspectives are not just tolerated—but honored?

## ***Prayer Prompt:***

As a group, spend time praying for:

- Healing in relationships—inside and outside the group
- Unity that honors differences without demanding sameness
- Blessing—that your group would be a place where God's presence feels tangible and joy flows freely

## ***Please Note:***

This psalm is short, don't feel pressure to stretch it. Instead, help the group slow down. Ask deeper follow-up questions about the stories and thoughts of the group members.



## Week Sixteen

### **Psalm 134**

*A song of ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord,  
who stand by night in the house of the Lord!

<sup>2</sup> Lift up your hands to the holy place  
and bless the Lord!

<sup>3</sup> May the Lord bless you from Zion,  
he who made heaven and earth!

Sunday • SEP 28

Speaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Passage: Psalm 134**

**Notes:**

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# Summer of Ascents

***Prayerfully consider...***

What is one thing you sense God saying to you through today's message? How will you respond in obedience this week?

[illegible]

# DEVOTIONAL

You've made the ascent. After 14 psalms filled with longing, confession, danger, joy, and hope, Psalm 134 brings us into the temple at night. It's a closing scene, but not a quiet one.

The psalm opens with a call to the priests—those staying up late, keeping watch, holding space for God's presence while others sleep. It says: "Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord... lift up your hands in the sanctuary and bless the Lord!" Even in the dark, worship continues.

This psalm reminds us that worship isn't just what we do when we gather. It's what continues when we go. When others are tired. When life is dark. Worship is a posture, a way of showing up with open hands, even at night.

Then the psalm ends with a reversal: the blessing comes back. "May the Lord bless you from Zion, He who made heaven and earth." It's not just a call to give praise, it's a promise that God is still giving, still watching, still present as we leave the temple and re-enter ordinary life.

Psalm 134 doesn't end the journey with closure. It ends with commission. We're not leaving God's presence, we're carrying it with us.

What does it mean to “bless the Lord,” especially in seasons that feel quiet or dark?

Who in your life has modeled faithfulness when no one was watching, like the priests serving in the night?

What do you hear in the final verse: “May the Lord bless you”? Is it comfort, empowerment, or something else?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## REFLECT & RESPOND

Read Psalm 134 again slowly, this time in The Message. Sometimes a different translation can offer a fresh perspective. Let each line sit with you. Underline or write down anything that stands out. Then, reflect on the prompts provided on the next two pages.

### ***Psalm 134***

<sup>1-3</sup> Come, bless God,  
all you servants of God!  
You priests of God, posted to the nightwatch  
in God's shrine,  
Lift your praising hands to the Holy Place,  
and bless God.  
In turn, may God of Zion bless you—  
God who made heaven and earth!

***Reflect***

What line draws you in the most? Why?

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What does it mean to carry a “nightwatch” kind of faith—faith that keeps worshiping in the quiet or dark?

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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ***Launch Question:***

Have you ever stayed up late to finish something meaningful—whether it was work, a conversation, a creative project, or something else? What did that feel like?

## ***Read Together:***

Encourage someone in the group to read Psalm 134 slowly and out loud. Consider reading it a second time in a different translation (NLT or The Message can offer fresh language). Invite a short moment of silence.

Then ask: What questions or thoughts come to mind as we read this psalm?

## ***Discussion Questions:***

### **Night Worship and Hidden Faithfulness**

- Verse 1 speaks to those serving in the temple at night. What does that image bring to mind? How descriptive can you get about that image?
- What does it look like to be faithful in the “night hours” of life—seasons that feel hidden, tiring, or slow?

### **Lifting Hands and Giving Praise**

- Why do you think the psalm calls people to lift their hands in worship? What does physical posture have to do with spiritual posture?
- How do you personally express worship beyond singing—what does it look like for you in ordinary life?

### **Receiving the Blessing**

- The psalm ends with a blessing: “May the Lord bless you from Zion.” Why is that a powerful way to end this whole collection?

- Have you ever struggled to receive God's blessing as a gift instead of something you have to earn?

### **Carrying Worship into What's Next**

- This final Song of Ascent feels like a commissioning. What might it mean for you to leave this series differently than you started it?
- What's one practice, rhythm, or insight from the last 15 weeks that you want to carry with you?

### ***Prayer Prompt:***

Close your group with a blessing-shaped prayer. Consider reading the psalm again, then praying:

- For gratitude—for the journey, the growth, the worship
- For God's presence—to remain real in everyday life
- For each person in the group—that they would continue to bless the Lord and receive His blessing in return

Invite the group to speak short blessings over one another: "May the Lord bless you as you..." (lead your home, start a new season, continue the climb, etc.)

### ***Please Note:***

This is a perfect week to celebrate what God has done. Give space for reflection. Let people share what changed for them over these 15 psalms. Don't rush to a new study—let this be a holy pause.

## ***Summer of Ascents: Psalms for the Journey***

If you've ever climbed the sand dunes along Lake Michigan, you know the feeling—shifting ground, tired legs, steep climbs that make you want to quit. But when you finally reach the top, the view is worth every step. That's the life of faith, and it's the heart behind the Psalms of Ascent.

In Psalms 120–134, God's people sang these songs as they traveled uphill to Jerusalem. The journey was steep, exhausting, and often dangerous. Travelers faced rough terrain, the risk of attack, and the weight of the long road ahead.

We're not making that same physical journey today, but the Psalms of Ascent were always about something bigger. They were written to prepare hearts—not just for Jerusalem, but for the lifelong journey of walking with the living God.

This summer, we'll explore these ancient songs of hope, perseverance, worship, and trust. Whether you're just starting your faith journey or have been walking with Jesus for years, there's always a next step toward Him.

Join us for Summer of Ascents and discover how God meets us on the journey.



Grace Community Church  
21001 Moross Road, Detroit, MI

**[gracewired.com](http://gracewired.com)**