

# Moving Through the Psalms of Ascent

## Week 2: Psalm 123 - 124

### Day 1 – Psalm 123

Read Psalm 123 in ESV, CSB, AMPC, and NIV or NLT. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

1. Finish this phrase from Psalm 123:1, *"To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are: \_\_\_\_\_"*

Beth Moore says this about Psalm 123:1, *"Where we look – where we genuinely fasten our gaze – amid continual life challenges has a tremendous impact on how we feel."*

2. How does where you look affect how you feel? Spend some time with this question and write down as many things as you can think of.
3. Read verse 2 in the NLT, how would you describe the servant and servant-girl in these verses?

The first two verses are humbling in the most gentle and reassuring way; reminding us of God's strength compared to our own. When these verses say that God's servants look to His hand, it can be a reference to strength instead of activity. {<-read that again and let it sink in} When I was a very little girl, I would lock my hands around my dad's arm, and he would lift me off the ground. As I giggled and dangled the only thing I really noticed was that he was strong. That's the picture here, attentiveness to God's strength.

4. What are the pilgrims begging for in verses 3-4 and why?

Contempt in verses 3-4 can mean disrespect. Look up a definition for disrespect and write it down.

5. What makes you feel disrespected? How do you usually cope with being disrespected?
6. Jesus' first followers in the early church were treated with contempt. Read Acts 4:1-4, 17-22 and summarize what is happening in the story. How does what they endured qualify as disrespect or contempt?
7. Now read their reaction in Acts 4:29-31. What lessons can you learn from them when you feel disrespected as a follower of Jesus?

#### ⇒ **Daily Pilgrim Progress:**

- What does this psalm teach you about where your heart is set?
- How does this psalm encourage you to move toward God?

## Day 2 – Psalm 123

Read Psalm 123 again, this time in the Message and jot down anything new that stands out.

1. What do you notice about the mood of the pilgrim when you read Psalm 123 in the Message?

Yesterday's lesson might've felt abrupt without much resolution or application. Today I want to go deeper and focus on another passage that supports our texts yesterday and is a beautiful blend of challenge and comfort. One of the most helpful things to remember when you're facing the painful discouragement of contempt is that you aren't alone. Yes, we have one another. This is a continued theme of the psalms of ascent, and I hope you're celebrating the gift of your spiritual traveling buddies and the life you share. But beyond that, deeper than that, I want you to learn and become convinced that you will never face any contempt that Jesus Himself hasn't already faced. He has felt it all, and He is with you.

Read Hebrews 12:1-3 in CSB and NLT

2. What words are used to describe Jesus in verse 2? Look at both translations and footnotes.
3. Make 2 columns. Title one *Jesus Verbs* and the other *Pilgrim Verbs*. Read verses 1-2 and list all the things Jesus does in his column, and all the things we are instructed to do in the pilgrim column. After making your lists, review them and write down what you notice.
4. According to verse 3 what keeps us from giving up?
5. Look up any cross-references for these verses and note what you learn.

Let's put this all together. I can find hope and strength to endure when I'm being disrespected, misunderstood, and mistreated because Jesus has faced the same things and understands. The things I'm called and instructed to do fall in line behind what He has already done. I can lock my gaze on Him and follow His example with the assurance that I'll be ok, actually more than ok – maturing, as He shapes my faith and perspective.

6. Where are you most weary? How specifically can you lean into Jesus for strength to not give up?

⇒ **Daily Pilgrim Progress:**

- What does this passage from Hebrews teach you about where your heart is set?
- How does this passage along with the lessons from Psalm 123 encourage you to move toward God?

### Day 3 – Psalm 124

Read Psalm 124 in ESV, CSB, AMPC, and NIV or NLT. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

1. This psalm starts with "*what if God had not been on our side?*" What do you think your life might look like without God?
2. Look again at verses 1-2. Who is instructed to "say" the truth of these verses?

A repeated theme in the psalms of ascent is the togetherness of our journey with God. This can be a little confusing since I alone am responsible for cooperating with God's call to obedience and growth. BUT, the christian life is one of family lived in the messiness and wonder of togetherness. When the psalmist instructs "let all of Israel say," I want it to remind us to keep imagining these songs and psalms sung and recited, sometimes through gritted teeth, by pilgrims worshipping God together.

3. What about you, are you comforted or put off by the togetherness of our faith journey? How can you invite God into that today?
4. What is it that the pilgrims need from God in this chapter?
5. Look up some of the cross-references for this chapter and jot down what you learn.

Did you find Psalm 94:17 in your list of cross-references? If not, take a few minutes now to look up Psalm 94:12-23 and read it in at least 2 of your favorite translations.

Make two lists: 1) the attacks coming against the psalmist, and 2) the ways God helps.

6. What do you learn about God in Psalm 124 supported in Psalm 94?
7. Is it hard for you to believe that God is really for you? How does your time in His Word today challenge or confirm your belief?  
->Read Joshua 23:10 before you move on from this question.

⇒ **Daily Pilgrim Progress:**

- What do the passages today teach you about where your heart is set?
- How does this passage encourage you to move toward God?

## Day 4/5 – Weekly Travel Journal

*This was a shorter week with only 2 psalms, but there was still so much to challenge and comfort us.*

Review your notes, and study question answers from this week. Summarize each psalm below in a couple of sentences:

- Psalm 123:
- Psalm 124:

What have you learned most about God this week?

Now look at your daily Pilgrim Progress journal prompts:

- What did you learn about yourself this week?
- What changes do you need to make in what you're thinking or what you're doing to stay close to God?