

# Moving Through the Psalms of Ascent

## Week 3: Psalm 125 - 127

### Day 1 – Psalm 125

Read Psalm 125 in ESV, CSB, AMPC, and NIV or NLT. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

1. Write down the chapter title to Psalm 125 from your Bible. If you can, look up the titles in ESV, CSB, and RSV and write them down too.
2. What theme do you notice from the titles?
3. What does it mean to trust? Look it up in the dictionary and add that to your own definition from experience.

In Psalm 125:1, the psalmist compares people who trust God to Mt. Zion which cannot be moved and abides forever. There is another mountain in Psalm 30:6-7. Read this passage in a couple of your favorite translations (*NIV is good here!*) and write down what you notice about the mountain.

4. How does the mountain in Psalm 30 compare to the mountain in Psalm 125? What do you think God is trying to teach you about trust?
5. Use your Study Bible or an online Bible and glance through all the cross-references listed in this chapter. *\*using biblegateway.com in the ESV I found 19 that were linked and easy to read. Choose 3-4 verses to write out. What does using this tool teach you specifically today?*

I think one of the hardest things for Jesus pilgrims is continuing to walk with God when life is hard, and we can't understand why He's letting it be. No fix, no answers, maybe some comfort; but no solutions. The last two years have been some of the hardest ones I've walked. God's instruction and comfort to me has been about learning to relax under anxiety and fear and stay with Him there. No rescue, just Him. Which sounds super great and spiritual until you're being crushed by circumstances and hurt that is disorienting and oh so painful. Psalm 125:3-5 gives clear instructions for us but is impossible without the assurance of Psalm 125:1-2. *{If that last sentence didn't make sense, re-read the verses to see what I mean...}*

6. What circumstances or people do you need to switch from a verse 3-5 category to a verse 1-2 category? *In other words, what do you need to fully entrust to God and let go of your efforts to control or escape?*

7. Read Philippians 4:6-7 (*you know, in a few translations*). Use what you've learned this week and write a go-to strategy that you can practice when you're overwhelmed and anxious. Pray over it and re-work it until you have 2-3 steps for Trusting God when you're worried. Write or type it out on a notecard or app and save it to your phone where you can find it easily and share it with your Bible Study buddies.

⇒ **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 126**

Read Psalm 126 in ESV, CSB, AMPC, and NIV or NLT. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

1. This psalm is a psalm of restoration. Look up the word restore and write down the definition.

Restore.

Bring back.

Repair.

Have you ever found yourself longing for restoration; for God to fix, bring back, go back? I read this studying, *"Psalm 126 comes from a people who are living between the times, between a good time remembered and another good time hoped for."* -James Limburg

2. When have you felt stuck between a good time remembered and hoped for?

God's ability and desire to be with us in the waiting gap between what's remembered and hoped for is a wonderful thing about Him, especially since that's when we are rarely at our best. He is so patient. He loves us so much. One of my greatest hopes for this study is that you will move toward the joy and maturity that welcomes this tension and gap.

3. In Psalm 126 *"what's remembered"* is in verses 1-3. Using your cross-references and notes in your Study Bible, what is the psalmist remembering? What response do God's people have to God's work in these verses?
4. In Eugene Peterson's chapter on Psalm 126 (p. 97-99) he lists some of the stories of God's people and their grateful responses when God brings them through difficulty.

-Using the 3 bullet points below look up the passages in the ESV or CSB and in the Message (*on biblegateway.com you can list the ESV and MSG side by side*). I've given you a brief historical context, but you might investigate that further in your study bible notes or by reading the surrounding verses to establish context.

-Answer this question as you read the passages: *How do the declarations of God's people show joy?*

- The escape from Egypt toward the Promised Land: *Exodus 15:1-2*
- David's stories of battle, sin and repentance, betrayal: *2 Samuel 22:1-2, 47, 29-30*
- The hope for rescue from the horrors of Babylonian captivity: *Isaiah 40:1-2, Isaiah 43:2-5, Isaiah 52:7-8*

I almost just left question 4 out or made it an optional "*for further study*" afterthought. But I decided to emphasize the idea of joy in the life of God's people and trust that God will help you connect the dots and encourage you. Because we tend to equate joy with happiness, or with the ease of a life going well as we wished, or at the very least moving past hardship; we MISS some of the most meaningful moments of joy with Jesus. The narratives that support the verses of joy and praise we just studied are full of sorrow, weariness, sinful choices and missteps, traumatic loss. How can we be women moving with and toward Jesus when our circumstances are painful? We will finish our study in Psalm 126 tomorrow, let's finish today with the beauty of this teaching on biblical joy:

5. Read Philippians 4:4-7 in the NLT and then answer these questions:
  - When are we to be "*full of joy*" (v 4)
  - What are God's instructions to you?
  - What does God promise to do in response?

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### **Day 3 – Psalm 126**

Yesterday we took a deeper look into what it means to be women of joy *{since joy is one of the themes of Psalm 126}*. We focused on finding joy as we remember God's provision and presence in the past, or for the "*good times remembered*" in Psalm 126:1-2. Review questions 1-3 in your work yesterday before we move on.

1. In Psalm 126:4-6 we see the shift to "*what's hoped for.*" What is the psalmist asking of God in these verses?
2. In verse 3 the people are glad, why?

I learned as I was studying that in verses 2 and 3 when the text says “*God has done great things*” that “*has done*” refers “*not to creation, but refinement.*” This made me pause, and kinda gut-checked me but I wasn’t sure why. As I spent a little time here, I realized this description challenges my motives. The entire point of this psalm is that pilgrims can look back on their stories with God and see how He has refined them through hardship, so that they can face CURRENT hardship with joyful hope. And quite simply, I usually don’t want to cooperate with that. But I’m learning that trusting cooperation is the key to gladness, to joy. It’s a crucial part of our growth and He loves us too much to let us skip it.

3. In verse 2 and in verse 3 we see reference to what God has done. Who is declaring what God has done each time? What does this teach you about the impact of your cooperation with God’s refining work?
  4. Where are some places that you’ve been resisting God because you’re fearful of refinement? Write that out here and start letting God work through this with you.
  5. What is the picture in verses 5-6? {for those artistically inclined, sketch it!}
  6. How does this encourage you in the things that are burdening you today?
  7. If you haven’t already, explore the cross-references for verses 5-6 and jot down what you learn.
- Look up Jeremiah 31:9 and Galatians 6:9 (*cross-references for Psalm 126:5*). What encouragement do you find in these passages as you are learning to cooperate with God’s refinement in your life? \*I especially love Galatians 6:1-10 in the Message

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## Day 4 – Psalm 127

Read Psalm 127 in ESV, CSB, and NIV or NLT. Today add the NCV (New Century Version) for one of your read throughs. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

1. Today's psalm of ascent has a different author. Who is it?
2. Who was Solomon? What do the following texts teach you about him?
  - 1 Kings 4:29-34
  - 1 Kings 11:1-8
3. Finish the following statements using verse 1. There are two answers for each blank.
  - Unless the Lord: \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The people \_\_\_\_\_ in vain.
4. Now add the additional things done in vain from verse 2. What is the warning of these first 2 verses of Psalm 127?

This chapter should be a comfort to us, but it likely falls more like a challenge on your heart today. I know it does mine. One of my fears is that I'll get close to the end of my life and have some regret epiphany realizing that I've wasted my life. I imagine God's people traveling to Jerusalem and considering the words of this psalm together, there's accountability here and challenge to be mindful of how they're managing the demands of work, family, worship...it's a good conversation.

5. What about you? Do you struggle to stay committed to work hard, or do you find yourself more in the workaholic camp? According to this passage, what is the key to find a work-life balance that pleases God?
6. Read the following New Testament passages and note how they apply to what we are learning.
  - John 15:4-5
  - 2 Thessalonians 3:11-13

At the end of verse 2 we are warned about eating the bread of "*anxious toil*." That phrase comes from a word that means to carve or fashion. I wonder how often we think we are getting up early and staying up late to be productive and take care of our people when really we are crafting our own anxiety, and just gobbling it down like it's bread. A misunderstanding of self-effort and work is a waste that feeds our anxious hearts and distracts us, making us less instead of more fruitful in the things that truly matter.

Ouch.

7. Read the final phrase of verse 2.
  - What does God give?
  - To WHOM does He give it?

For some of you, the entirety of this lesson is summed up in this phrase: ***stop trying so hard and take a nap***. The rhythms of rest and work must flow out of the sweetness of relational connection with God, anything else is waste.

The connection to verses 3-5 seems a bit strange at first glance. And while we will be spending time learning the cultural context in our large group study, I want to offer this statement from Beth Moore's study on these verses (p 92); "*You do not have to have physical children to do some effective parenting.*"

8. Read Luke 8:19-21. How does Jesus define family? Is this comforting or painful to you?
9. As you prayerfully consider the instruction and challenge in this psalm, who are the people God has put into your life as family?
10. Take a few minutes to finish your time in Psalm 127 answering these questions from the Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary:
  - *What are you building?*
  - *What are you protecting?*

***POA-> As Jesus Pilgrims:***

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### **Day 5 – Weekly Travel Journal**

*This week got rather personal, no? That balance between comfort and challenge that I love so much about God's Word was on display for sure. Before you move into these application questions read Psalm 125-127 straight through in the Message.*

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

- Psalm 125:
- Psalm 126:
- Psalm 127:

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?