

Moving Through the Psalms of Ascent

Week 6: Psalm 132 - 134

Day 1 – Psalm 132

Psalm 132 is the longest in the Psalms of Ascent. Read it in your three favorite translations. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

This psalm is so interesting! It is the 10th of 11 royal psalms and is intended to elevate and rehearse the hope of the pilgrims' connection to the Davidic Dynasty.

1. What do you know and remember about King David?
2. Using your imagination, how might revisiting the stories of Hero King David encourage the faith of the pilgrims as they are traveling?
3. Who is your hero in the faith? How does remembering their life and lessons encourage you?

The structure of this psalm is a prayer lifted up from the psalmist/pilgrims (verses 1-10) followed by God's response (verses 11-18). Let's do an overview of these requests and answers before we fill in some of the narrative gaps. If there are people and places you don't yet know, just leave that out for now.

4. Read verses 1-10 and write down the things that the psalmist is asking of God in a column, leaving room next to each request.
5. Now read verses 11-18 and write down how God promises to answer next to each request.
6. What does this list teach you about God?

Review Psalm 132:2-8. Let's read the narrative that goes with the history they're remembering. First of all, the ark that is referenced in this chapter is not the Noah one. The word ark in verse 8 literally means chest or box. But this one was special. *{You can do a deep dive into its creation and purpose right after the exodus, with the creation of the tabernacle}*. The ark represented God's presence *with* and *guiding of* His people. I appreciated this summary and description from the Christ-Centered Commentary: (p237)

"Many knew that God was everywhere, as Psalm 139 teaches us. But the ark symbolized God's special presence. It manifested God's power and glory. And it was the place where sacrifice for sin was made on the Day of Atonement. The mercy seat or the atonement cover served as a lid on the ark. It had cherubim of gold facing each other with their faces bowed,

symbolizing God's holy presence. Here the high priest would make a great sacrifice for all the people once a year on the Day of Atonement, as he sprinkled blood on the mercy seat. But in David's day no one seemed to miss the ark." That last phrase is tragic, no one missed it.

7. With this description in mind, read 1 Samuel 6:21-7:2 and note where the ark is in the time of David, the emotional state of the people, and how long the ark was left here.
8. Read 2 Samuel 6:1-14 and summarize the story. Note especially David's emotions in verses 8-9.
9. Now go back to our Psalm 132, many scholars think that the prayer to "*remember David's suffering*" is referring to the story you just read. How about you? Have you ever thought you were honoring God only to have your efforts disappoint? What did David do in 2 Samuel 6:10-11?
10. Now read 1 Chronicles 15:11-15 and summarize the story. In verse 13 there is an important phrase. Fill in the blanks here according to the ESV "*We did not _____.*"
11. Are there places where you are pushing an agenda that seems godly and right but really you haven't sought Him?
12. Once David got his motives in line behind God's holy instructions, he was able to fully walk in overflow of obedience to his calling. Read 2 Samuel 6:14. What is David's reaction to finally bringing the ark home?
13. What is the description of the saints in Psalm 132:9, 16?

The first mention of the saints in Psalm 132 is the psalmist praying that they will shout for joy, the second mention is God promising that they will. Did you see David dancing with all his might? Look at what verse 14 also says, "*So David and all the people of Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with **shouts of joy**.*" Just like the saints in Psalm 132. Just like the faithful sorrow-seed planters in Psalm 126. There is such value in the process of continually bringing our deepest dreams and disasters before God. He refines our motives, protects us from short-sighted mistakes, gives us understanding, and brings our dreams to life after loss and big mistakes; so that we can celebrate with hard-fought shouts of JOY. Only God can do that. And He delights to.

⇒ **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 132

Yesterday we did an overview of Psalm 132 as well as study the background narratives that shape this royal psalm.

1. What was your biggest takeaway application from Day 1 yesterday?

Today I want us to go a little deeper into the promises God gives in the back half of Psalm 132.

2. Who are the two groups of people listed in verse 9 and 16?
3. What does the psalmist ask God to clothe the priests with in verse 9?
How does God answer in verse 16?

I find this so interesting; when they ask God for righteousness, His answer is salvation. The word for salvation in verse 16 is *yasha* which means “to deliver, rescue, save.” It comes from a word meaning spacious, wide open, free; the opposite of cramped. And even more beautifully, Jesus’ name, Yeshua, comes from *yasha*.

4. Where do you feel trapped and cramped today? What does it mean to you that God gives salvation?

As I was reflecting on the last few verses of Psalm 132, I was so humbled and thankful for how Jesus is the fullness of these promises God made. In the psalm God promises to choose, dwell with, bless, satisfy, clothe, give strength and guidance. His promise is to His people through a Messiah, whose lineage includes King David.

5. Which promise in Psalm 132:13-18 means the most to you today?
6. Read Revelation 1:5-6 and 5:9-10. What do these texts say Jesus has made us?
7. Now read 1 Peter 2:9-12 and make a list of all the things believers are and the instructions of things we are to do.

I hope the tie-ins of the imagery in our Psalms of Ascent study and the declarations in 1 Peter are an encouragement and an exhortation to live UP to your identity; to live OUT of your calling. He saves us which alone is a miracle, but in that salvation is an identity and a heritage that gives us purpose. May we not waste our lives on things that don’t matter; but live as saints, priests, saved ones, who reflect His strength and light.

8. How do the identity declarations of the passages we've studied today challenge you to live differently? Make an actionable plan you can share and then choose one person to share it with. Write their name at the top of this question.

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Day 3 – Psalm 133

Read Psalm 133 in ESV, CSB, AMPC, and NIV or NLT. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

1. What do you think is the main theme of these three verses?
2. Look up a definition of the word unity, what does it mean?

I love how the Message starts Psalm 133, "*How wonderful, how beautiful when brothers and sisters get along.*" I wonder how this falls on you today. Depending on your personality this could resonate differently, but for me this chapter calls out a core longing. Loss or lack of connection is the most painful thing to me in relationships. I really need my people to get along with me and with each other.

3. What about you, what are the biggest challenges for you to feel unity and connection in your relationships?

The thing about this psalm is that it doesn't really tell us how to get along, it just tells us that it's good when we do. The examples in verses two and three would have heads nodding with "*oh yeah, that's right..that's good*" when the pilgrims remembered and sang these verses, but the importance escapes modern us. We are less familiar with anointing oil and Mt. Hermon.

The anointing oil is symbolic of the uniqueness of God calling people out to belong to and serve Him (*see Exodus 30:22-33*). The dew on Mt. Hermon is symbolic of the expectancy of growth and nourishment for God's people. And BOTH examples are intended to elevate the importance of family, especially spiritual family.

4. Who has God given to you that you would consider spiritual family? **this may or not be literal physical family – it's ok either way!*

-How do these spiritual family members encourage you to follow God and refresh you when you're weary? Be specific.

I want to take a minute right here to acknowledge that you may be in a season of life where this is a painful question to consider, and you just can't answer. If so, use the space to set your longings before God prayerfully, and ask Him for spiritual family...new or healed. We ALL will face loss and misunderstanding and disappointment with family. For me, when I keep my focus on HIM; I can look around to serve, connect, care for others who might become family.

Eugene Peterson's chapter on Psalm 133 speaks directly to this. He says that "*no Christian is an only child. Instead of asking- Am I a part of the family? Ask, How am I going to live as part of this family?*"

5. Read Psalm 68:4-6 in your favorite translations. What does this psalm say that God does? How can you look for ways to cooperate with Him; live as a part of the family of God?
6. Look up the following verses and note what you learn about the importance of unity:
 - Ephesians 4:1-3
 - John 17:20-21
 - Hebrews 10:24-25
7. The ending of Psalm 133:3 says that "*there*" God has commanded His blessing. What do you think He means by "*there*?"
8. What is the blessing God commands? Look up this last phrase in different translations to see what it means.

God's blessing when His people live in unity is life that is more than just now, it's forever. The togetherness that has been a theme through the psalms of ascent is life-giving. It matters. We must NOT be content to live with a fractious, hurtful, and hateful manner of life. When we prioritize unity in spiritual family, we are prioritizing something God says is precious.

9. Now read Romans 12:9-21. Write out verse 18, copying from your favorite translation.

This passage from Romans gives such a practical guide for church folks living in community together. I love it so much. God's ideal is the perfection of spiritual unity, it's beautiful to Him (*Psalm 133:1*). But He stays with us in the reality of the less unified messiness of life. Romans 12:18 helps us to set healthy boundaries. For some reading this, you need to work harder to pursue unity; for others, you need to rest in the truth that you've done all that you can and trust God to bring healing His way and in His time.

⇒ **Daily Pilgrim Progress:**

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

Day 4 – Psalm 134

Read Psalm 134 in ESV, CSB, AMPC, and NIV or NLT. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

1. Look up Psalm 134:1 in the CSB, and write down the first word here:

Now.

I really like the CSB, and especially here. We are at the end of our journey through the Psalms of Ascent. The pilgrims have arrived, now they are free to worship night or day with hands raised high, blessing God and receiving His blessing. The reciprocity of this nearly undoes me. I imagine myself a pilgrim entering the temple gates after weeks of traveling; hands raised, spinning in circles, blessing and being blessed. What joy!

2. When you look back on your weeks in the study of these psalms, what's your "*Now what?*" How will you live out the lessons you've learned?

I was very convicted by this quote describing the worship of the pilgrim in Psalm 134 (and really all of the psalms of ascent): "*Worship isn't about our work, our performance, or our goodness; it's about God's work, God's grace, and God's goodness. He is worthy of praise.*" -Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary

3. Using this quote, write out some examples of your efforts compared to God's below:

My Work:

God's Work:

My Performance:

God's Grace:

My Goodness:

God's Goodness:

In Psalm 134:1 the servants of God stand in His house at night. What strikes you about this image? "*Stand means to be present, alert, and ready to do whatever the master wants done.*"

4. Read Ephesians 6:11, 13, 14. What do these verses teach you about how you stand?
5. The pilgrim stands with hands raised. Read Psalm 28:2 and 1 Timothy 2:8 and note what you learn.
6. Close this psalm by reading Hebrews 12:22-24. In this amazing description of Mt Zion, who are we coming home to? Write down everything you see.

For us, the pilgrim view isn't a physical Jerusalem, it's heaven. Coming home we will greet angels gathered, God's people celebrating being made perfect and complete, and best of all, Jesus Himself. Can you imagine?

This is why we keep our hearts set on pilgrimage.

This is why we stay with Him.

This is why we are determined to walk with Him.

Heaven is home, and He is with us every step of the way.

⇒ ***Daily Pilgrim Progress:***

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Day 5 – Weekly Travel Journal

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

- Psalm 132:
- Psalm 133:
- Psalm 134:

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?