

“AS A DEER LONGS FOR FLOWING STREAMS”
Seven Days with Psalm 42-43



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PSALM 42-43

As a deer longs for flowing streams,
 so my soul longs for you, O God.
 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
 When shall I come and behold the face of
 God?
 My tears have been my food day and
 night,
 while people say to me continually,
 “Where is your God?”

These things I remember, as I pour out
 my soul:
 how I went with the throng,
 and led them in procession to the house
 of God,
 with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
 a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
 and why are you disquieted within me?
 Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
 my help and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;
 therefore I remember you
 from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
 from Mount Mizar.

Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your
 cataracts;
 all your waves and your billows have gone
 over me.
 By day the Lord commands his steadfast
 love,
 and at night his song is with me,
 a prayer to the God of my life.
 I say to God, my rock, “Why have you
 forgotten me?”

Why must I walk about mournfully because the
 enemy oppresses me?”
 As with a deadly wound in my body, my
 adversaries taunt me,
 while they say to me continually, “Where is
 your God?”

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
 and why are you disquieted within me?
 Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
 my help and my God.

Vindicate me, O God,
 and defend my cause against an ungodly
 people;
 from those who are deceitful and unjust
 deliver me!

For you are the God in whom I take refuge;
 why have you cast me off?
 Why must I walk about mournfully
 because of the oppression of the enemy?

O send out your light and your truth; let them
 lead me;
 let them bring me to your holy hill and to your
 dwelling.

Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my
 exceeding joy;
 and I will praise you with the harp, O God, my
 God.

Why are you cast down, O my soul,
 and why are you disquieted within me?
 Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
 my help and my God.

OTHER SCRIPTURES

MONDAY—JOHN 4:13-14 :: Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

TUESDAY—MARK 15:33-34 :: When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

WEDNESDAY—MICAH 7:18-20 :: Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of your possession? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and unswerving loyalty to Abraham, as you have sworn to our ancestors from the days of old.

THURSDAY—MATTHEW 25:34-40 :: Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

FRIDAY—ROMANS 10:12-15 :: For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

SATURDAY—PSALM 30:11-12 :: You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

SUNDAY—LUKE 24:30-32 :: When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

TO MY PARENTS who pray
“in the tongues of men and of angels” (1 Cor. 13:1 KJV)

MONDAY

PRAY: God, you alone satisfy the deepest desires of my soul. Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me. In the Name of Jesus, the Well of Living Water, Amen.

READ: Psalm 42-43; John 4:13-14

CENTERING VERSE: “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” (Psalm 42:1-2)

The principle requirement for growing in our intimacy with God is have *a desire* to grow in that intimacy. Richard Foster put it best: “In one important sense, the Spiritual Disciplines are not hard. ...The primary requirement is a longing after God.” (*Celebration of Discipline*, p. 2)

For generations, ever since Jesus, the Church has taken up the discipline of fasting. Originally, fasting meant abstaining from food to devote time to silence, meditation, study or intense prayer. (Fasting is always done alongside another discipline, usually prayer.) Nobody is sure how fasting began or how it “works.” Maybe the physical hunger leads one to think of one’s hunger for God. Or the state of hunger reminds the one fasting on Whom one ultimately depends.

Today, people fast not only from food, but from internet, TV, Facebook, or anything else that seems to be dominating their life.

REFLECT/ACT: FASTING

1. Fasting...
 - a) Option 1: Give up one meal for the day. *
 - b) Option 2: Give up another activity for the *entire* day (internet, Facebook, TV, etc.)
2. The time you usual spend eating that meal (or doing that activity from which you are abstaining), spend that time doing another spiritual discipline. Here are three that you can do:
 - a) Bible study: Consider reading Esther 4, Isaiah 58, or Luke 4. (All three have to do with fasting.)
 - b) Prayer: Either spontaneous prayers or written; repeat the Lord’s Prayer; pray using the Psalms or the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Anglican Church (www.bcponline.org).
 - c) Service: Prep or pack the meal you are fasting, and give it to someone in need; clean the neighborhood park

* If you have any medical condition that requires that you eat regular meals (for example, diabetes), please abstain from something else.

TUESDAY

PRAY: God, in Christ you stand with me in my sense of abandonment. Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me. In the Name of the Crucified One, Amen.

READ: Psalm 42-43; Mark 15:33-34

CENTERING VERSE: “I say to God, my rock, ‘Why have you forgotten me?’while they say to me continually, ‘Where is your God?’” (Psalm 42:9,10)

Most people accept that God is everywhere. And this is true! St. Augustine said that God is an ocean and the universe is merely a sponge. Meaning, God is beyond the sponge and yet always in it, saturating every inch of the sponge. As the apostle Paul rightly points out, “...one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:6)

Sometimes, we are especially attuned to that Presence. We feel it in our very being, or we just have a holy hunch that the space of moment is God-heavy. (In Hebrew, the root word for “glory” is “heavy” or “thick”.) Celtic spirituality speaks of “thin places”: moments in life where the “veil” between heavy and earth is thin, almost see-through.

And other times, we *feel* as if God is nowhere to be found or at best, as if God is distant. We feel alone and even abandoned by God. Jesus felt this himself. Today, we will take time exploring these moments of perceived presence and absence.

REFLECT/ACT: (José’s Revised) Ignatian Prayer of Examen

The Ignatian Prayer of Examen comes to us from our sisters and brothers in the Jesuit tradition. The main purpose of this prayer is to cultivate our sense of God’s presence (and our perceived absence of God) in our everyday. Today’s time of reflection should be done later in the day, if possible, as one of the last things you do before going to sleep.

In your prayer time, take some time with these two questions, which are inspired by the Ignatian Prayer of Examen:

1. When did you sense God’s presence most profoundly today? What were the circumstances during which you felt drenched in God’s presence? What did this moment teach you about the way to relate to God?
2. When did you feel as if God was absent or distant today? What were the circumstances during which you felt distant from or missing God’s presence? What did this moment teach you about the way to relate to God?

End with a prayer of gratitude to God, thanking God for both moments and for what each taught you about your relationship with God.

WEDNESDAY

PRAY: Merciful God, you take our sins and throw them into the depths of the sea. Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me. In the Name of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, Amen.

READ: Psalm 42-43; Micah 7:18-20

CENTERING VERSE: “Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; from those who are deceitful and unjust deliver me!” (Psalm 43:1)

I once heard it said that we are not punished *for* our sins. Rather, we are punished *by* our sins. Sins are sins precisely because they hurt us. And most times, they not only hurt us; they hurt those around us.

Whenever we pray raw prayers like the one in our Centering Verse, we must admit that we have been on both sides of that equation: we have been both victims and perpetrators of sin; we too have been “deceitful and unjust.” We are guilty of things we did and things we left undone. As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.”

Today, I want us to reclaim that dangerous yet liberating discipline known as confession. Confession allows us to name those sins, bad habits, and hurtful things that we continue doing, asking God to break the cycle. We practice confession, not out of guilt or fear, but out of hope: hope in a merciful and forgiving God. We will couple this practice with the prayer mantra known as “The Jesus Prayer,” which comes to us from the Eastern Orthodox Tradition.

REFLECT/ACT: Confession/The Jesus Prayer

1. Take at least five (5) minutes in silent reflection. Think about those sins, bad habits, hurtful things that have a grip on your life.
2. Write down those sins on a sheet of paper. Read them aloud to yourself.
3. Say the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.”
4. Repeat the Jesus Prayer the rest of the day. (The Jesus Prayer is a mantra, that is, it’s supposed to be repeated.)

THURSDAY

PRAY: Liberating God, you stand with the oppressed and marginalized, and call for justice to roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream. Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me. In the Name of Christ the Liberator, Amen.

READ: Psalm 42-43; Amos 5:24; Matthew 25:34-40

CENTERING VERSE: “My tears have been my food day and night...” (Psalm 42:3)

Liberation theology is a theological and renewal movement, initiated in Latin America, which calls for the Church to hear God’s call for justice and to stand with the poor. Liberation theology teaches that true conversion means converting to God *and* to neighbor. One of the signs that we are growing in Christ, according to Daniel Migliore (*Faith Seeking Understanding*), is that we grow in our solidarity to those who suffer. After all, compassion literally means “suffer with.”

When it comes to growing in compassion, the spiritual discipline of service is both a means and an ends: that is, the more we serve, the more we grow in compassion; and the more we grow in compassion, the more we serve. The well-know Prayer of St. Francis is based on this premise.

REFLECT/ACT: Service/Acts of Compassion

1. Pray the Prayer of St. Francis.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light. Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;

to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. Amen.

2. Pack an extra lunch and give it to someone in need.
3. Connect with a local non-profit or charity organization, and sign up to volunteer *within a month*.
4. Have a posture of service throughout the day, and serve wherever possible.

FRIDAY

PRAY: Good God, your good news is worth sharing with the world. Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me. In the Name of Christ the Herald of Good News, Amen.

READ: Psalm 42-43; Romans 10:12-15

CENTERING VERSE: “These things I remember...” (Psalm 42:4)

The spiritual discipline of evangelism has fallen on hard times. Some in the Church have abused and misused it, using fear tactics, with threats of eternity in hell, to coerce folks to accept Christ as their “personal Lord and Savior.” (The phrases “*personal* Lord” and “*personal*/Savior” are nowhere to be found in Scripture.) Others, in reaction, have disavowed evangelism all together.

Yet, evangelism can be profoundly transformative, not just for the hearer but for the one doing the sharing. And evangelism is quite simple, really! It’s not conversion (only God can convert people), or “making a sale.” Evangelism begins by remembering what God has done in the world (Jesus’ story), and what God is doing in your life (your story); then sharing that story with others. Evangelism is simply sharing with others our story of our journey with God, and letting God do the rest. In evangelism we plant a seed; God sees to it that it grows and bears fruit.

A college friend of mine once said, “José, sharing my faith keeps my faith exciting.”

REFLECT/ACT: Evangelism

1. Share your faith story, your journey with God, with someone else (a friend, neighbor, random stranger, when the opportunity surfaces). If the conversation leads to an invitation to experience worship with you one Sunday, don’t let the opportunity pass by!
2. Afterward, reflect on the experience of sharing your faith: What fears or insecurities surfaced? What was most exciting about sharing your story?

❖ HEADS UP! SUNDAY’S DEVOTIONAL TIME IS TO BE DONE *BEFORE* WORSHIP.

SATURDAY

PRAY: God of joy, Lord of the dance, you have turned my mourning into dancing. Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me. In the Name of Jesus Christ, your Joy made flesh, Amen.

READ: Psalm 42-43; Psalm 30:11-12

CENTERING VERSE: "...glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival... and at night his song is with me..." (Psalm 42:4,8)

I don't know why we Christians are sometimes the most boring people. Our moping around with long faces has given people the impression that Church is a laughless enterprise. Yet, we have the joy of Christ in our hearts! We have received the good news that frees us to live life in celebration. Hallelujah!

Richard Foster, in his *Celebration of Discipline*, lists "celebration" as a spiritual discipline. So on this Saturday, we will have fun in the presence of God!

REFLECT/ACT: Celebration

1. Do something you enjoy!
2. Bring joy to someone else.

SUNDAY

PRAY: God, you alone are worthy of our praise. Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me. In the Name of the Resurrected One, who breaks bread with us, Amen.

READ: Psalm 42-43; Luke 24:30-32

CENTERING VERSE:

“These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng [crowd], and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.” (Psalm 42:4)

Worship is at the heart of the Christian community; it is the lifeblood of the Church. Unfortunately, most Sundays, we just go through the motions. There’s no intentionality in our worship. Yet when we ready our hearts, we can be deeply transformed by the worship experience. In the Pentecostal church I grew up in, people arrive to the sanctuary early and spend some time before worship in prayer. The sole purpose of this pre-worship prayer was to prepare our hearts to receive anew of the Holy Spirit. This time was called *altar de oración* (“altar of prayer”).

REFLECT/ACT: Altar of Prayer/Worship

1. Arrive to worship early and find your seat in the sanctuary.
2. Read Luke 24:30-32.
3. Take some time in prayer (about 5 minutes), asking God to soften your to hear God’s Word and receive anew God’s Spirit.
4. Participate attentively and intentionally in worship.
5. After worship, share with someone your experience of worship: Which song resonated with you? When did you hear “the living word”? When during the worship service was your heart on fire?

LOOKING AHEAD

THE NEXT LEG IN THE JOURNEY:

1. DEVELOP A “RULE OF LIFE” FOR YOURSELF. The monasteries, since St. Benedict (c.480–547 CE), have developed “rules” and precepts that would serve as guides for monks. This gave the monks some structure to their relationship with God, with each other, and with the world. Consider giving yourself a “rule of life.” It doesn’t have to be that long, 5-10 “rules” that will guide your everyday living in the presence of God.
2. FIND A SUPPORT/ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER. We need support for the journey. As my seminary professor once said, “You can’t be a Christian by yourself.” Find someone who will support you and whom you will support.
3. FORM A COHORT OF “PILGRIMS.” Perseverance is best nurtured in groups. So develop a group that will journey together in the practice of spiritual disciplines. Use devotionals or “Rules” to guide your journey together (see below.)
4. DEVELOP DIFFERENT WAYS TO PRAYER. With the help of your pastor and elders, discover and practice different ways to pray. The Christian Tradition is a deep well from which to draw.

RULES OF LIFE:

- *Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, online: <http://www.ccel.org/k/kempis/imitation/>
- *The Rule of St. Benedict*, online: <http://www.osb.org/rb/>
- *Life Together*, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

DEVOTIONALS, AND PRAYER GUIDES:

- *Celtic Benediction: Morning and Night Prayer*, by J. Philip Newell
- *Incandescence: 365 Readings with Women Mystics*, ed. By Carmen Acevedo Butcher
- *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*, by Shane Claiborne and others
- *I Asked for Wonder: A Spiritual Anthology*, by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel
- *The Questions of Jesus: Challenging Ourselves to Discover Life’s Great Answers*, by John Dear
- *Prayers for the New Social Awakening: Inspired by the New Social Creed*, ed. By Christian Iosso and Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty

BOOKS FOR GROUPS TO USE:

- *A Spiritual Formation Workbook: Small Group Resources for Nurturing Christian Growth* (Revised Edition), by James Bryan Smith and Richard J. Foster
- *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, by Richard J. Foster
- *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism*, by Martha Grace Reese
- *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life*, by Tony Jones

SACRED MUSIC:

Liturgica Music, online: <http://www.liturgicamusic.com/>
Chant, by The Benedictine Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos
Gospels, Spirituals, and Hymns, by Mahalia Jackson