



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V27 N29

July 20, 2025

PSALMS: CELEBRATING CHRIST IN GOD'S HYMNBOOK

"Psalm 103"

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Personal God

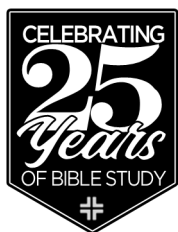
I believe God is involved
in and cares about my
daily life.

*"I lift up my eyes to the
mountains – where does my
help come from? My help
comes from the LORD, the
Maker of heaven and earth."*

Psalms 121:1-2



How do I know
God is a per-
sonal God?



Theists, namely, philosophers and theologians who agree that God exists, disagree as to the nature of God. For example, not all theists agree that God is a personal God. Deists are theists who do not subscribe to the creed, "I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life." One theologian describes *deism* this way: "According to this view, God is distinct from everything in our world, and he does not interact with it. He initially created the universe, but then withdrew from it to let it run on its own . . . The deistic God does not act in the world or sustain it, but remains thoroughly aloof from it. From a practical standpoint this view is tantamount to atheism" (John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 61). Plenty of people on the street are deists, that is, practical atheists. God doesn't matter, so practically speaking, he doesn't exist. The idea of a God who is a friend and confidant, sympathetic to our needs and concerned to help us spiritually and otherwise, flies in the face of the deistic idea of God.

The idea also flies in the face of contemporary *materialism*, about which the same author explains: "The only truths available about our world come through the natural sciences. Religion, theology, ethics, and metaphysics tell us nothing more about the world. In light of such views, moderns claimed to explain everything that happens in our world in terms of natural processes. When some event occurs, there is no need to appeal to God to fill in the gaps of our knowledge. For many, these metaphysical and epistemological doctrines meant that there is no God. For others such as the deists, there is a God, but he does not act in our world. For yet others, there might be a God, but there is little we can know or say about him" (90-91).

An example of deistic, practical atheism can be found in the psalms. Psalm 73 describes the psalmist's struggle with a conundrum he voices in verse 12: "This is what the wicked are

like – always free of care, they go on amassing wealth." The wealthy wicked, about whom he writes, deny that God knows about their "pride," "violence," "iniquity," "evil imaginations," "malice," "arrogance," and "oppression" (vv. 6-8). It doesn't appear that they deny God's existence; rather, they deny his interest and involvement in their lives. "They say, 'How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?'" (v. 11). God doesn't know because God doesn't care. He simply isn't involved in human affairs.

Psalm 103 debunks the wrongheaded deistic notion that God is aloof, uninterested, and uninvolved in peoples' lives. It clearly teaches that God is a personal God – unfortunately, deists do not accept the testimony of scripture. Speaking to himself, the psalmist writes: "Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (vv. 1-2). What follows is a list of benefits that are clearly personal in nature. One commentator writes: "The Lord 'forgives . . . heals . . . redeems . . . crowns . . . satisfies' (vv.3-5). The repetitive use of the pronouns ('who' and 'your') personalizes the acts of God in that he forgives and restores individuals. These graces flow out of the covenantal promises (Ex 34:6-7), according to which the Lord sustains the relationship by being forgiving, loving, and full of compassion but also just" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 756).

Other verses in the psalm echo the fact that God is a personal God. He does what is right and just (v.6), reveals his ways to Moses (v. 7), and shows his people compassion, grace, mercy, love, understanding, and empathy (vv. 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17). And finally, he relates to his people like a father to his children (v. 13). It doesn't get any more personal than that!

Read Psalm 103:1-22

Of David.

1 Praise the LORD, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
2 Praise the LORD, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits –
3 who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
5 who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

6 The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.

7 He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:
8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
9 He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

13 As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
14 for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.
15 The life of mortals is like grass,
they flourish like a flower of the field;
16 the wind blows over it and it is gone,
and its place remembers it no more.
17 But from everlasting to everlasting
the LORD's love is with those who fear him,
and his righteousness with their children's children –
18 with those who keep his covenant
and remember to obey his precepts.

19 The LORD has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.

20 Praise the LORD, you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
who obey his word.
21 Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts,
you his servants who do his will.
22 Praise the LORD, all his works
everywhere in his dominion.

Praise the LORD, my soul.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Highlight vv. 1a, 22b.
- Circle "soul" in vv. 1a, 22b.
- Underline "me," "my," and "your" in vv. 1-5.
- Circle "benefits" in v. 2.
- Circle "diseases" in v. 3 and "pit" in v. 4.
- Circle "love" in vv. 4, 8, 11, 17.
- Bracket vv. 6, 19.
- Box "so that" indicating *result* in v. 5.
- Box "like" indicating *comparison* in vv. 5, 15.
- Circle "righteousness" and "justice" in v. 6.
- Box "as" indicating *comparison* in vv. 11, 12, 13.
- Box "For" indicating *reason* in vv. 11, 14.
- Circle "fear" in vv. 11, 17.
- Box "But" indicating *contrast* in v. 17.
- Bracket "from everlasting to everlasting" in v. 17.
- Circle "covenant" in v. 18.
- Underline "throne" and "kingdom" in v. 19.
- Underline "praise" the LORD in vv. 20, 21, 22a.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. The psalmist addresses “my soul” in verses 1-2 and uses the pronoun “your” in verses 3-5. What does “my soul” mean and to whom does “your” refer? Explain.
 2. Explain what he means by “*forget not* all his benefits” (v. 2b).
 3. He describes the LORD (cf. “who . . .”) using five *participles* (vv. 3-5). List the five participles (ending in “s”).
 4. Put what verse 6 means in your own words.
 5. List the LORD’s attributes cited in verses 8-10.
 6. Explain the use of *comparison* in verse 11, verse 12, and verse 13.
 7. The LORD “has *compassion* on those who fear him.” Why so?
 8. *Summarize* the psalmist’s description of humanity (vv. 14-16).
 9. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 17 – include an explanation of what “from everlasting to everlasting” and “those who *fear* him” mean.
 10. Describe the *extent* of God’s dominion and its *implication* for praise.
 11. **Discussion:** Talk about your answer to any of the three “living questions.”
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Commentary On The Text

On Psalm 103, one commentator writes: “Psalm 103 is a wide-reaching hymn of praise that reaches out and touches most of the great theological issues of the life of faith – sin and forgiveness, sickness and health, oppression and vindication, God’s election of Israel and the gift of the law, God’s transcendence and God’s mercy, human mortality and divine immortality, and the reign of God. Given the nearly universal scope of the psalm’s praise, one might well consider it the most soaring lyric in the Psalter” (Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf F. Jacobson and Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, 759).

The psalm is often divided into three (vv. 1-5, 6-18, 19-22) or four parts (vv. 1-2, 3-5, 6-19, 20-22) by commentators. The ones cited above organize the psalm around the Hebrew term *hesed*, translated “love,” which refers to Yahweh’s unflagging loyalty to the covenant he made with Israel. Sandwiched between opening (vv. 1-2) and closing (vv. 20-22) *calls to praise*, are the psalmist’s comments on the LORD’s *hesed* from the perspective of the individual (vv. 3-8), from the perspective of the community (vv. 9-16), and from the perspective of humanity (vv. 17-19) (760). They call it “a meditation on the character of the Lord (faithfulness is the fundamental attribute of the Lord) as made known through the Lord’s *benefits*” (759). The following analysis recognizes the *inclusio* in verses 1-2 and in verse 22b, and divides the body of the psalm into three parts: vv. 3-5; 6-18; 19-22a.

In the opening (vv. 1-2) and the closing (vv. 22b), the psalmist exhorts his “soul,” his whole self, to “praise the LORD.” He’s not addressing his immaterial part in *contrast* to his material part, that is, his physical body. The term “soul” is used here with reference to the psalmist’s whole being. The parallel line, “*all my inmost being, praise his holy name*” (v. 1b) points to this. While less literal, two other translations express the meaning more clearly: “Praise the LORD, my soul! *All my being, praise his holy name!*” (GNT), and “*Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name*” (NLT).

The psalmist – David (if the superscription “Of David” indicates *authorship*) or perhaps a later author (if the superscription indicates *belonging to a Davidic collection of songs*) – is a member of the covenant community. As such he personally benefited from the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai. In verses 3-5, he lists the benefits of Yahweh’s *hesed*, defined as his loving loyalty or faithfulness to the covenant, and exhorts himself to not forget them, that is, to not ignore that these blessings come from the LORD. He expresses them using five participles. The LORD “*forgives,*” “*heals,*” “*redeems,*” “*crowns,*” and “*satisfies.*” Addressing himself, he refers

to “*your sins,*” “*your diseases,*” “*your life,*” “*you,*” and “*your desires.*” The psalmist quite literally talks to himself about the LORD’s benefits – restorative benefits that result in the vigor of youth being restored to him (cf. Isa 40:30-31). The words “*redeems your life from the pit*” (v. 4) – other translations read “grave” (GNT) or “death” (NLT) – deserve additional comment. They clearly indicate that “the Lord is able to save one’s life, no matter what the nature of the threat or crisis is” (deClaissé-Walford, 763), but do they imply more? One commentator thinks they do. He thinks they allude to resurrection (see note).

In verses 6-18, the psalmist lists benefits of the LORD’s *hesed* to the covenant community, that is, to Israel. He “*works righteousness and justice*” (v. 6), that is, “*the LORD does fairness, and [acts of] justice for all the oppressed*” (*The NET Bible*, 9tn on Ps 103:9). Put differently, he “*does what is equitable*” and “*puts things right*” in the nation. One commentator writes: “Verse 6 is a topic sentence that introduces what follows. Verses 7 and 8 describe the LORD’s dealings with Israel at Mt. Sinai. The fact that He revealed Himself to Moses and the Israelites indicates His great compassion and grace. Verse 8 quotes Exodus 34:6. It restates four great characteristics about God: ‘He is slow to anger, bears long with those that are very provoking, defers punishing, that he may give space to repent, and does not speedily execute the sentence of his law’” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Psalms,” 2025 ed., 377, sonlight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/psalms.pdf).

Verses 9-12 illustrate the truth of verse 8. “He does not constantly accuse or antagonize His people, even though we constantly sin (cf. Eph. 6:4). He is slow to anger, and He does not maintain His anger continually. His gracious character is obvious in that He does not punish us for our sins immediately or completely, as we deserve. He does not pay us back what we deserve either. His mercy (Heb. *hesed*) with those who fear Him is as limitless as the sky. Furthermore, He separates our sins from us completely (cf. Rom. 8:1)” (Constable, 377).

In verses 13-18, the psalmist first compares the LORD’s compassion to that which a father has for his children (v. 13), then explains the reason behind that compassion, namely, that those children are frail, mere mortals, who are here today and gone tomorrow (vv. 14-16). Unlike his *hesed* that, by way of contrast, abides strong forever to those who fear him. It transcends generations and continues on to the descendants of those who obey His law (cf. Exod. 20:5-6).

In verses 19-22a, the psalmist declares that the sovereignty of the LORD extends worldwide over all his creation. And because he is a beneficent ruler, all his angels and all his works should praise him.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *Praise . . . my soul* The repetition of the same phrase at the beginning and end of the psalm is an example of *inclusio*, a literary device in which a passage begins and ends with similar or identical words, phrases, or themes, creating “bookends” or an “envelope” structure. It’s used to focus attention on the content within the brackets.

vv. 1a, 23b *soul* The meaning of “soul” is defined by the parallelism—“all that is within me” (ESV), “all my being” (GNT), “my entire being” (NCB; cf. NABRE), i.e., “one’s ‘total being’” (Nancy de-Claissé-Walford, Rolf F. Jacobson and Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, 759). “There is no thought of a separation between ‘soul’ and ‘inmost being’ (lit., ‘my inner parts’) or between ‘soul’ and ‘body,’ because in Hebraic thought the worshiper praises the Lord with his or her entire being” (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 756).

vv. 1-5 *me, my, your* The psalmist addresses himself in verses 1-5. “The scope of this psalm broadens enormously: it opens with a command to the self and closes with a command to all his works. It progressively moves from the individual sphere (‘my’ in vv. 1-5), to the social, national and broadly human spheres (‘the people,’ ‘us,’ ‘those who fear him’ in vv. 6-18), and then to the heavenly spheres (‘you’ in vv. 19-22)” (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 394).

v. 2 *benefits* I.e., “the gracious deeds of Yahweh recounted in verses 3-5. ‘To forget’ is not so much a slip of memory, as a deliberate act of ignoring the goodness of God (see on 119:16). Similar warnings are frequent in Deuteronomy (4:9,23, 6:12, 8:11, 32:18)” (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC, 2:712-13).

v. 4 *diseases* “The ‘diseases’ may be forms of sickness (cf. Mk 2:7), but more likely it is a metaphor for adversities or setbacks (cf. Dt 29:22; Jer 14:19; 16:4), similar to punishments (‘sins’)” (VanGemeren, 757). The parallelism between God’s forgiving of sins (lit., ‘iniquities’) and healing of diseases (v. 3) suggests there may be a connection” (Broyles, 395); cf. Dt 28:21-22.

v. 4 *pit* Cf. “the grave” (GNT); “death” (NLT). “At one level, to be redeemed from the Pit could be an expression simply for rescue from a premature decease (see on 6:5; 28:1). But the larger question of man’s ransom from death, ‘that he should continue to live on for ever’, is seriously explored in the Psalter (see, e.g., 49:7-9, 13-15), and makes

it possible, that we should take 4a in its stronger sense, as resurrection to eternal life. On this hope, Psalm 16:9-11, which is also Davidic, is even more explicit” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 398).

vv. 4, 8, 11, 17 *love* Hb. *hesed* is often translated “loyal love,” “covenant loyalty,” or “faithfulness.” “When referring to Yahweh, *hesed* means, in the first place, his Covenant promises and all that they imply; while the *hesed* of the Israelite consists, primarily, of his loyalty to his Covenant obligations” (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC, 1:215). The LORD remains faithful to his covenant promises.

v. 5 *like* “The vigor of youth is restored to match the proverbial, unflagging strength of the eagle (see Isa 40:30-31)” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ps 103:5).

v. 6 *righteousness, justice* “These verses [i.e., 6, 17], and verses 7-8 in particular, contain echoes from Exodus 33-34” (Broyles, 395). “Verse 6 is a topic sentence that introduces what follows. Verses 7 and 8 describe the LORD’s dealings with Israel at Mt. Sinai. The fact that He revealed Himself to Moses and the Israelites indicates His great compassion and grace. Verse 8 quotes Exodus 34:6. It restates four great characteristics about God” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Psalms,” 2025 ed., 377, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/psalms.pdf).

vv. 11, 17 *fear* Not a reference to people who are afraid but to “those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts” (v. 18).

v. 17 *everlasting to everlasting* Cf. Ps 90:2 with reference to the eternal God. In contrast to the transitory nature of human life (vv. 15-16), “the LORD’s mercy (loyal love) to those who fear Him abides strong forever. It transcends generations and continues on to the descendants of those who obey His law (cf. Exod. 20:5-6)” (Constable, 378).

v. 18 *covenant* I.e., the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, namely, the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Ex 19:5; 20:6; Dt 4:40; 29:9).

v. 19 *throne, kingdom* “His ‘throne’ is in heaven (cf. 11:4; 93:2), but his kingdom extends to all creation (cf. 93:1; 96:10; 99:1; 1Ch 29:11-12)” (VanGemeren, 759). As Creator, Yahweh is Sovereign over all that exists.



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Praise the LORD for all his benefits, which are expressions of his great love.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

I'm a reformed yeller. I come from generations of yellers, and when my kids were preschoolers, I discovered I was following that very same destructive path. I knew there was a problem when one day I completely lost my cool and had a full-on temper tantrum with a stomping foot and metaphorical smoke coming out of my ears. It was bad. I remember visiting with a mentor of mine, picking her brain about constructive ways to discipline and not lose my cool, when she told me she never yelled. How is that even possible?! Instantly, I was convicted and knew I had to make a change before I continued this generational sin. It took lots of time and an abundance of prayer, but my yelling days are behind me. One of the verses that helped me is Psalm 103: 8, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." Part of what we're called to do is model godly behavior for our kids. If God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love, shouldn't I be? I want my kids to know the true character of God. I also want them to describe me in this very same way. I don't want them to fear coming to me because they think I'll lose my cool; I want to be the person they run to in times of trouble. I praise God for doing a work in my heart and changing my behavior so that I model His character. He'll do the same for you. All you have to do is turn to Him for help. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Psalm 103.

1. What word do you see repeated at the beginning and end of this psalm?
2. How is the Lord described in verse 8?
3. How long will the Lord's love last for His people? (v. 17)

What Do You Think?

How far is the east from the west? Knowing our sins are as far from us as the east to the west, how does that make you love Jesus?

What Do You Do?

Psalm 103 encourages us to praise God for who He is. Make a list of all God's qualities with words that correspond to the letters of the alphabet (A - awesome, B - boundless, etc.).

CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Galatians 5:22-23

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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**CENTRAL
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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.