



The Scrolls

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

V27 N18

May 4, 2025

PSALMS: CELEBRATING CHRIST IN GOD'S HYMNBOOK

"Psalm 42"

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."

Psalm 121:1-2



When you feel a long way from God, what should you do?



A. W. Tozer wrote: "We have almost forgotten that God is a Person and, as such, can be cultivated as any person can. It is inherent in personality to be able to know other personalities, but full knowledge of one personality by another cannot be achieved in one encounter. It is only after long and loving mental intercourse that the full possibilities of both can be explored" (A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, 13). Tozer's point: a personal relationship with God is possible, because God is a person. But like any personal relationship, it must be cultivated through repeated contact over time. If anything, the book of Psalms reveals the personal relationship of the psalmists to the LORD, their Lord, that is to Yahweh, their Adonai.

The psalmists know God. They know things *about* him, and they *know him personally*. Consider Psalm 42. The psalmist, perhaps an exiled temple singer or musician, refers repeatedly to God as "my God" (vv. 1, 5, 11). And in the verses in between he speaks of God in a *personal* way. He has a personal relationship with God. He expresses his longing for God. He "thirsts" for him and wants a face-to-face meeting with him (v. 2). He recalls delightful times in God's presence (v. 4) when he praised God along with a festive throng of worshippers (v. 4). He tells himself, "put your hope in God" (vv. 5, 11), with whom he obviously has a *personal* relationship. Talking like one friend who misses another, he declares that his "soul is downcast" by the fact that he is far from God's *temple* presence (v. 6), and yet, he is confident of God's loves (v. 8); God is his "Rock," namely, his divine defender (v. 9). Ironically, the close personal relationship he enjoys with God only adds to the intensity of his lament. "Why have you forgotten me?" he asks (v. 9). Why do you not vindicate me before my enemies (v. 9)? Knowing that the Lord is his God, the taunts of his enemies, "Where is your God?", cut him to the bone (NET). If he did not know God, if God were not his friend, such questions would not torment him.

Now, consider this. It's possible to be known

by God, and yet not know God. Put differently, it's possible for children of God to not *know* their Heavenly Father – in the same way that it's possible for a child to know its father's name but not *know him personally*. John makes this clear in his first epistle. Consider 1 John 4:7-8. "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves *has been born of God* and *knows* God. Whoever does not love *does not know* God, because God is love." One commentator explains: "Of **everyone who loves** two things may be safely said: (1) such a person is **born of God** and (2) he also **knows God**. It should be carefully noted that John here treats these concepts as two different things. This is especially observable when he goes on to say (in verse 8) that 'he who does not love does not know God.' It would have been both natural and easy to say, 'He who does not love, *is not born of God* and does not know God' in direct antithesis to the statement of this verse. But this is precisely what cannot be said" (Zane Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 183). This cannot be said because *being born of God* and *knowing God* are two separate things.

These simple observations raise a profound question. How does one get to know God? While love at first sight may be possible, friendship at first sight surely is not. Tozer is right. People get to know one another over time; a friendship develops over time – likewise a friendship with God. One way we get to know God is by *being with* him. Time spent in *prayer, solitude, and silence* is time well spent. Try going for a quiet walk. Start your walk with this prayer, "Lord, I just want to be with you." See what happens. Another way is by *learning about* him. This will take more than sermon *listening*. Try reading the Scriptures reflectively for yourself. If you want to learn about God, read about Jesus. Read the Gospels. Jesus is God's incarnate Son, the *spitting image* of his Father. A final way is by *learning from him*, namely, by learning from experiences with him. Learn about his faithfulness from his involvement in your daily life.

Read Psalm 42:1-11

For the director of music. A *maskil* of the Sons of Korah.

1 *As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.*

2 *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?*

3 *My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"*

4 *These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.*

5 *Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.*

6 *My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon – from Mount Mizar.*

7 *Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.*

8 *By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me –
a prayer to the God of my life.*

9 *I say to God my Rock,
"Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?"*

10 *My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"*

11 *Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.*

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

- Underline "Sons of Korah" in the superscription.
- Box "As . . . so" indicating *comparison* in v. 1.
- Circle "soul" in v. 1.
- Bracket "go and meet" in v. 2.
- Circle the question marks in vv. 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 11.
- Circle "people" in v. 3.
- Bracket "used to go" in v. 4.
- Highlight vv. 5, 11.
- Circle "hope" in vv. 5, 11.
- Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 6.
- Underline "Jordan," "Hermon," and "Mizar" in v. 6.
- Bracket "have swept over me" in v. 7.
- Bracket "bones suffer mortal agony" in v. 10.

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

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

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. Put how the psalmist feels and why (vv. 1-2) in your own words.
2. The psalmist isn't *literally* eating and drinking his tears, is he? Explain.
3. Describe the "people" who ask, "Where is your God?" (cf. vv. 9, 10).
4. *What* does the psalmist "remember" (v. 4), and *why* does it matter?
5. Verse 5 and verse 11 each contain the same two *rhetorical* questions. Put the point of each question in your own words.
6. *Where* is the psalmist when he writes the psalm, and *why* does it matter?
7. Verse 7 is a figurative description of *what*?
8. In verse 8, the psalmist appears to give himself a word of encouragement. How so?
9. In verses 9-10, the psalmist tells God what he already knows. So what's the point?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the practical value of knowing the psalmist's situation and his response to it.

Commentary On The Text

Psalms 42 and 43 were once one psalm, as in many Hebrew manuscripts. Why they were separated is unknown—perhaps for liturgical purposes. One commentator lists the evidence for their unity: “Even though the MT and LXX keep them separate, there are internal arguments for their unity: (1) the absence of a superscription above Psalm 43; (2) the repetition of a refrain (42:5, 11; 43:5); (3) development of thought from remembrance (42:4, 6) to a specific hope of restoration (43:3); and (4) the lament form . . . each psalm is an *individual lament*” (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 380). That said, Psalm 42 will be treated as it appears in our English Bibles.

The psalm can be divided into two stanzas each ending with the refrain found in verse 5 and verse 11. In the first stanza (vv. 1-5), the psalmist “pants for God” (v. 1) like a “deer pants for streams of water” (v. 1), longing to “go and meet with God” (v. 2). He is far from Jerusalem (v. 6) and being taunted by his enemies (v. 3), but remains confident, hoping in God that he “will yet praise him” (v. 5). In the second stanza (vv. 6-11), he laments that his enemies have overwhelmed him like “waves and breakers” sweeping over him (v. 7). But again, he remains confident, hoping in God that he “will yet praise . . . [his] Savior and [his] God” (v. 11). *Lament* and *hope* are reflected in the psalm’s structure: Lament in vv. 1-4, 6-7, and 9-10 and hope in vv. 5, 8, and 11.

In the first stanza, the psalmist finds himself far from God, far from his temple presence in Jerusalem, and consequently, far from the sense of his presence spiritually. Like a deer who thirsts for water, he longs to meet with God face-to-face, in other words, to return to the temple and be with him. One commentator writes: “Living in isolation from the land, he cannot experience God’s presence in the magnificent structure of the temple . . . The depth of his sorrow is hyperbolically expressed by ‘tears’ as his ‘food’ (cf. 80:5; 102:3-11; Job 3:24). The taunts of the enemies only serve to bring him closer to despondency” (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 382). La-

menting his present situation, his thoughts turn to past celebrations he enjoyed in the house of God, when along with other worshippers, he rejoiced and praised God. These memories of festivals past no doubt served as a source of inspiration, that is, words of self-encouragement spoken to one experiencing the dark night of the soul. The two rhetorical questions likely serve as a mild rebuke. Their sense might be expressed this way: “My soul, you have no reason to be downcast. You have no reason to be disturbed within me.” Instead of being downcast and disturbed, “Put your hope in God,” being confident that “I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God” (v. 5).

In the second stanza, the psalmist continues to grapple with his situation. The same commentator writes: “in spite of the psalmist’s reflections and expression of the triumph of hope, the experience of alienation is still there. He is still ‘downcast’; therefore he returns in his memories to the Promised Land, symbolized here by ‘the land of the Jordan the heights of Hermon’” (VanGemeren, 385), thereby employing the same strategy he used in the previous stanza (v. 4). His continuing distress is expressed figuratively in verse 7. He is a man overwhelmed by the waves of troubles than sweep over him repeatedly. “The writer feels engulfed by his misfortunes, as by rushing torrents” (A. A. Anderson, *Psalms 1-72*, NCBC, 333). Perhaps verse 8 should be understood according to the same pattern of verse 4, namely, with reference to the psalmist’s sense of God’s past behavior and thus be rendered, “By day the Lord *used to* direct his love, at night his song *used to be* with me.” Understood this way, the verse leads logically to the complaint of 42:9 (see Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 197-98).

In his lament in verses 9-10, he asks God his “why” questions: “Why have you forgotten me? . . . Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?,” that is, by those who ridicule him for trusting in his God. The psalm ends with the same refrain that ends the first stanza.

On the relevance of the psalm for contemporary believers, another commentator writes: “When spiritually dry, we who are believers should remind ourselves that God is sufficient for all our needs. This remembrance will encourage us to continue to trust Him while we go through temporarily distressing periods (cf. 23:4)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Psalms,” 2025 ed, 201, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/psalms.pdf).

Word Studies/Notes

superscription *Sons of Korah* “The sons of Korah were distinguished musicians. One man named Korah was a great-grandson of Levi who rebelled against Moses’ leadership (Num. 16:1-2), but this Korah was one of the Levitical musicians that David and Solomon placed in charge of temple worship (1 Chron. 6:16-44; 15:5-24; 16:41-42; 25:1-8). Some scholars believe that David wrote these psalms [i.e., Pss 42, 44-49] for the sons of Korah to perform. Others believe the sons of Korah composed them” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Psalms,” 2025 ed., 198, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/psalms.pdf).

v. 1 *As . . . so* “*deer pants for . . . water*. Because its life depends on water—especially when being pressed by hunters, as the psalmist was by his oppressors” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ps 42:1). “The animal’s need for water to sustain its life forms a fitting simile for a soul’s need of the living God (cf. 143:6), the Source of spiritual life” (Allen P. Ross, “Psalms,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 825).

v. 1 *soul* Cf. “I” (NET, NLT, HCSB, GNT), a reference to the psalmist’s “whole being.” “As usual ‘soul’ does not denote spiritual aspect exclusively. People intensely long for (‘pants for . . . thirsts’ vv.1-2; cf. 63:1) fellowship with God and will not be content until they can return to Jerusalem and praise God with great joy (43:4)” (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 382).

v. 2 *go and meet* Cf. “come and appear before God” (ESV); “go and appear in God’s presence” (NET); “go and worship in his presence” (GNT). “The question, **When can I go and meet with God?** Points to a pilgrimage and a ‘face-to-face’ encounter at the house of God . . . This sense of longing is engendered by the memory (**I remember**) of **shouts of joy and thanksgiving** at the house of God” (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 196).

v. 3 *people* Lit. “while *they* say” (ESV). The NIV takes the pronoun to refer to the psalmist’s “enemy” (v. 9) i.e. his “foes” (v. 10)—as do most other English versions. However, one commentator argues: “They (i.e., his tears, not **men**, which is not in the MT) seem to **say** persistently” (Broyles, 196).

v. 4 *used to go* The psalmist, perhaps a worship leader in exile, “meditated on the pilgrimages to the temple, the festive celebrations, and God’s triumphs in the history of salvation. During the three annual pilgrimage festivals (Passover, First-fruits, and Tabernacles; cf. Ex 23:17; 34:18-26; Lev 23:4-44; Dt 16:1-17), the pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem and presented their offerings and sacrifices with great rejoicing” (VanGemeren, 382). “Whether the singer led the worshippers in procession or only took his place among them depends on the meaning of a rare word which the ancient versions read differently from the Masoretic Text” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 183-84). “I would go with the throng and *lead them in procession* to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival” (ESV); cf. “I used to go to the house of God *under the protection of the Mighty One* with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng” (NIV).

v. 6 *Jordan, Hermon, Mizar* “The psalmist wrote as though he was far from Jerusalem and the central sanctuary. Evidently he was near the Hermon range of mountains that stood north of the Sea of Chinnereth (Galilee). The Jordan Valley is quite wide north of this lake, and the mountains of Hermon rise up to the east from it. Mount Mizar is one of the hills in that area. It was a long way from Mount Zion (Jerusalem), where the ark resided in David’s day” (Constable, 200-201).

v. 7 *have swept over me* “The psalm employs the image of **the roar of your waterfalls**. Now instead of the living God supplying streams of water for the speaker’s thirsting soul (42:1-2), he drowns him: **all your waves and breakers have swept over me**” (Broyles, 197). “Here is the picture of all that is overwhelming: his footing gone, and wave after wave submerging him. This is the very language that Jonah takes up in the depths (cf. 7b with Jon. 2:3)” (Kidner, 184).

v. 10 *bones suffer . . .* Cf. “My enemies’ taunts cut into me to the bone” (NET); “My adversaries taunt me, as if crushing my bones” (HCSB); “Their taunts break my bones” (NLT). “His whole being (‘my bones’; cf. 6:2) is distressed by his foes and by God’s silence” (VanGemeren, 387).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

When you feel far from God and he feels far from you, remember your former fellowship and put your hope in him.

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

As part of the counseling ministry, I've had the privilege of meeting with many friends of all ages and stages, walking alongside them through a particularly low point in life. They've waved the white flag, tapped out, acknowledged their crumbling circumstances and asked for a little help climbing out of the pit. Most of these people could echo Psalm 42, "Where are you, God? Why are You so far away when I need you most? Did you forget about me?" Though each person and situation is unique, there's a perceived universal thread of broken intimacy with the Creator. Gently, we steer them to the Lord. Humbly, we encourage them to practice disciplines that will cultivate their relationship with the one true God. We remind them of the Gospel until they are in the practice of reminding themselves. Reading the Bible, praying, meditating on God's Word—these aren't items on the to-do list of life. They are salve for the soul, balm for the open wounds. We encourage these practices in children because they are habits that right our ship and point us in the right direction. Learning these disciplines is a compass pointing due north to which our kids can return day after long, hard day. They spark intimacy and offer life-giving hope. Before your kids do their math homework, practice the piano or head out to a soccer scrimmage, encourage them to dive into relationship with the Lord. Go over their monthly memory verse, walk through the *Scrolls*, turn on a worship song, tell them your favorite Bible story—cultivate and give them something to return to. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Psalm 42.

1. What emotion is the psalmist experiencing (look for the word *soul* throughout the psalm)?
2. What question are the people asking in verse 3?
3. In verses 5 and 11, how does the psalmist answer his own question?

What Do You Think?

Why is it important to put your hope in God?

What Do You Do?

Spend 15 minutes with God each day this week—5 minutes in prayer, 5 minutes listening to worship, and 5 minutes reading the Bible. Each day record what you learned about God.

CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Timothy 1:7

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids 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.

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) from 1986 to 1998 and Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church (Fort Worth, TX) from 1998 to 2022. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

© 2025 Central Bible Church.

Material researched, written and supervised by Dr. Tom Bulick. All Scripture referenced from the New International Version unless otherwise noted. This resource is freely distributed and may be copied without permission.



**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76120
817-274-1315
wearecentral.org

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