



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N25 June 22, 2025

PSALMS: CELEBRATING CHRIST IN GOD'S HYMNBOOK

"Psalm 84"

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Personal God

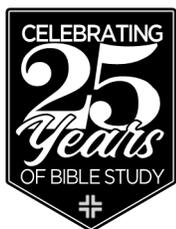
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

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

Psalm 121:1-2



Where is God at my church?



God is involved in and cares about our daily lives. But how much are we actively involved in his affairs? How often do we tangibly demonstrate that we care about what goes on in the workings of our Heavenly Father? God is more than personal with us. How consistently relational are we with him?

Gallup Polling has recently reported that as few as three in 10 Americans say they attend religious services every week (21%) or almost every week (9%), while 56% report they seldom (25%) or never (31%) attend. Gallup also reports that, among major U.S. religious groups, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also widely known as Mormons, are the most observant, with 67% attending church weekly or nearly weekly. Next, 44% of Protestants (including nondenominational Christians) attend services regularly, followed by Muslims (38%) and Catholics (33%) (news.gallup.com/poll/642548/church-attendance-declined-religious-groups.aspx). These attendance trends are in significant decline compared to attendance rates of two decades ago. According to Gallup in 2003, 42% of Americans attended church regularly.

Causes for these trends are many. The Covid pandemic influenced many to not return to regular church attendance. Younger generations may find it difficult to attend church services when many things compete for time and attention. Many are getting spiritual inspiration through social media and other forms of popular communication. Unfortunately, church attendance is trending much like movie theater attendance and radio programming. Church attendance is not the sole marker of spiritual intimacy with God, but it does shine a light upon the level of spiritual commitment that is lacking in many sectors of our population.

Many churches are diligently using modern methods of communication and outreach.

Churches today have more resources, training and capital than ever before. Sometimes spiritual improvements require reprioritization and recalibration. Church attendance alone is never as compelling as church involvement. Finding ways to serve at church can increase attendance and investment in church. Serving at church beyond just consuming a sermon can make a sermon more applicable. Service at church can also encourage others in their own walk with God.

Along with formally volunteering, friendly interaction with others at church can make church life more meaningful. Arriving a few minutes early to strike up a conversation with those sitting alone can make your morning and a visitor's morning more pleasant. Inviting someone to join you in your Community Group or Home Group can have great mutual impact. Telling church staff or regular volunteers how much you appreciate them can increase the awareness of God's individual care for you and others.

After Sunday church attendance, you can increase church involvement by making sure that you are being generous with your time and resources. During the week you can volunteer with other church ministries and can use those serving opportunities as channels to invite others to join you at church. Church involvement is more than just Sunday morning. But we should not neglect our gathering together on Sundays (Heb 10:25) because we have been busy with the body of Christ earlier in the week.

Henry Blackaby of *Experiencing God* fame frequently advised, "Look to see where God is working and join Him." There is no better way to experience our Personal God's involvement in your daily life than by following such a plan. God is active and doing much in your church. Join him in that loving activity and you will experience more of his favor, honor, strength and blessing (Ps 84:8, 11-12).

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Psalm 84

*For the director of music. According to gittith.
Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.*

1 How lovely is your dwelling place,
LORD Almighty!

2 My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God.

3 Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young –
a place near your altar,

LORD Almighty, my King and my God.

4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you.

5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

6 As they pass through the Valley of Baka,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

7 They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.

8 Hear my prayer, LORD God Almighty;
listen to me, God of Jacob.

9 Look on our shield, O God;
look with favor on your anointed one.

10 Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.

12 LORD Almighty,
blessed is the one who trusts in you.

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

- Underline each reference to a part of the psalmist in vv. 1-2.
- Circle each occurrence of the words “place,” “courts,” “home,” and “house” in Ps 84.
- Place a box around each use of the name “LORD” or “LORD Almighty” in Ps 84.
- Underline each use of the name “God” in Ps 84.
- Double underline each use of the word “blessed” in Ps 84.
- Draw an arrow from the word “strength” in v. 5 to its source.
- Draw an arrow from the word “favor” in v. 11 to its source.
- Double circle all of v. 12 to highlight the final conclusion of the psalmist.

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. Describe the emotions expressed by the psalmist in vv. 1-2. What exactly does he want?
2. What place is the psalmist describing in vv. 1, 3, 4, and 10?
3. What type of logic is the psalmist using in vv. 3, 4, and 10?
4. Is the psalmist in danger of creating an idol out of the “house of God”? Why or why not?
5. What does a heart “set on pilgrimage” look like?
6. According to the psalmist, from where do strength, favor, honor and blessing come?
7. To whom is the psalmist referring in v. 9? How does this prayer influence the meaning of Ps 84?
8. The psalmist seems to be exaggerating in vv. 10-11. What is he trying to communicate with this extreme language?
9. According to the psalmist, what or whom is more important, “the house of the God” or “the God of the house” (v. 11)? Explain your answer.
10. In the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21), the writer of Ps 84, as well as all followers of Christ, will have all their desires fulfilled. How so (consider Rev. 21:3-7, 21-27)?

The LORD God Almighty (Ps 84:8) is so magnificent that even physical places associated with him are considered great (Ps 84:1, 3-4, 10). We know that God's greatness transcends the physical, and no place can contain him (Isa 66:1-2; Acts 7:44-49). God does not need a "house," yet he instructed his people to build a tabernacle (Exodus 25-40) and ultimately a temple (1 Chron 28-29) as a place of worship. A single place of worship stood in stark contrast with the polytheistic world that built shrines and temples to gods on every high place and in many cities. The people of the one true God were to build one place of worship in one location. The people of this God were to make pilgrimages to this single location to focus their worship and celebration of this one true God.

Psalms 84 joins the greatness of God to a single place where one would go to worship him. The psalmist uses the logic of lesser to greater to help describe how great God truly is. God is so great that even small birds (Ps 84:3) or a lowly doorkeeper (Ps 84:10) are better off in close proximity to God than those who dwell in the tents of the wicked. "This psalm expresses the joy that comes through intimacy with God. In Israel this took place in proximity to Yahweh's localized presence in the temple. Today it takes place as the believer trusts and obeys God as He has revealed His will in Scripture. There are degrees of intimacy. This psalm visualizes getting closer to God by approaching the temple. Some believers choose to live close to God, and others prefer to live further away from Him. Of course, unbelievers have no personal relationship with Him" (Thomas Constable, *Notes on Psalms*, 2025 Edition, 329).

Most students of Psalm 84 divide the psalm into three sections. "All three of the psalm's stanzas pronounce a blessing (cf. Ps 1:1): the first on those who dwell in Yahweh's house, ever praising him (84:4); the second on those whose strength is in Yahweh (84:5); and the third on the one who trusts in Yahweh (84:12). The overriding message of Ps 84 is that there is no place more desirable than the presence of God and nothing more rewarding than walking in integrity with him" (James M. Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, vol. 2, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary, 97). Even more important than the place of worship is the heart of the worshiper (Ps 84:5) and his walk with God (Ps 84:11).

The writer begins his psalm with a passionate description of love for God and his dwelling place (Ps 84:1-4). The descriptor "lovely" is a term of relational affection and is translated elsewhere in terms of matrimony (Ps 45:1). The word for "dwelling" is the same word translated "tabernacle" as described by Moses (Ex 26:1). This love is further described as a "yearning" (Ps 84:2), not just for the place but for the "living God" himself. The location is a way to describe the psalmist's intense desire to draw closer to the person of God.

The second description of "blessing" is found in pilgrimage language (Ps 84:5-9). Here the psalmist is not

focused on the place of God's dwelling, but on the travel of getting closer to God. The heart set on pilgrimage to God is the one who is made strong by God. Even through barren places (see note on "Baka"), those who seek after God will be strengthened as they seek to draw near to God in Zion (Ps 84:7). "Psalm 84 is a Zion psalm, a psalm of pilgrimage that focuses on the people's pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem to celebrate one of the great festivals (probably the Feast of Tabernacles). Although this psalm finds its roots in the literal, physical pilgrimages of the period before Judah's exile, the imagery of the day soon became spiritualized and associated with the life of faith. Thus, the significance of Psalm 84 continued after the destruction of the temple as a psalm celebrating the privileges of life with God" (Jamie A. Grant, "Psalms 73-89," in *Psalms*, vol. 2, The NIV Application Commentary, 244).

Before the psalmist issues his final "blessing" (Ps 84:12), he asks for favor upon "our shield" and "your anointed one." This is a call for blessing upon both the current king of Israel and ultimately to God's final Messiah/Anointed One. "This psalmist who loves God's temple (84:1-4), who knows God's strength for the narrow path (84:5-8), also knows what the pilgrimage to Zion is ultimately about. Those thrice yearly trips to Jerusalem (cf. Deut 16:16) were fostering hope that God would deliver in the future through the messiah the way he had in the past through the likes of Moses and David. The hope was that the future king from David's line would bring about a new exodus, a return from exile, a restoration of the temple to glory, and a spreading of Yahweh's reign from Jerusalem to the far corners of the earth. Thus would the world become God's cosmic temple, and thus would God be present in all places with his people" (James M. Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, vol. 2, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary, 101).

As much as the psalmist loves God's dwelling place (Ps 84:1, 4, 10), he concludes that God's blessings come not from a place but from God himself. Those who trust in God (Ps 84:12) are blessed with favor, honor and all good things as they walk blameless in their pursuit of God (Ps 84:11). "If, until now, the psalm has placed the emphasis on the pilgrimage to the temple, the conclusion, in continuity with the spiritual dimension of the previous verse ('those who walk uprightly'), no longer mentions either the pilgrimage or the temple. As Jeremiah denounced, there can be a false trust in the temple (cf. Jer 7:4,14), which, instead of leading to God, separates from him. Verse 12 takes us back to the essential: trust is to be placed not in the temple but 'in you', that is, in God. Moreover, we should note that the subject of the 'trust' is not the Israelite but 'the man', in v. 12 as in the parallel, v. 5, with a possible allusion to the pilgrimage of the peoples (cf. Isa 2:1-5; Mic 4:1-3; Zech 14:16-19)" (Gianni Barbiero, "The Literary Structure and Meaning of Psalm 84," *Biblica*, vol. 103, no. 4, Dec. 2022, 523).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *lovely* “more exactly ‘How dear’ or ‘How beloved’; it is the language of love poetry. Psalms 42:4; 43:4 give a glimpse of the delight which a dedicated servant of the temple found in his role—a joy quite foreign to the uncommitted (cf. Amos 8:5!). The Christian equivalent is ‘love of the brethren’, who are individually and collectively God’s temple (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19)” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, vol. 16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, 334).

v. 1 *Almighty* “The tone is very gentle and contemplative. It is focused on the delights of dwelling in the presence of God, yet the psalmist addresses his exclamation to the ‘Lord Almighty’ (‘Yahweh of Hosts [or ‘Armies’]). The contrast of foci is surprising, but the point seems quite clear. The God who is King dwells with his people. The Warrior God is also the God who meets with his people. It is a remarkable conjunction of imagery—the people love to dwell in the presence of the God of Armies. He may well be terrifying to all enemies, but those under his protection are attracted to his presence” (Grant, 245).

v. 2 *yearns* “The one praying the psalm is moved by the ‘inner’ quality of the Temple area with its various buildings (the Temple proper as well as other buildings required for various services) and the great courts. It is Yhwh’s residence, where one can see, hear, and experience him. But there may also be an element of the idea that many people gather in the courts or plazas within the Temple area and feel themselves ‘at home’ in them—like the birds that nest there. This closeness to his or her God, loyally declared to be ‘my King,’ is something the one praying also desires to experience” (Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, 355).

v. 2 *faints* “‘Craved’ (*kāsap*) is a very rare verb (see 17:12; Gen. 31:30; Job 14:15), while ‘exhausted itself’ (*kālā*) is much more common (e.g., 69:3 ; 71:9; 73:26; 90:7). Both are forceful in meaning, the more so in combination. The first suggests greed or keenness or desperation. The second implies that the person was consumed by this feeling. Together, they suggest that the person was torn apart by the longing” (John Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, vol. 2, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament, 589).

v. 3 *sparrow* “From their privileged position in the nooks and crannies of the temple precincts, the birds fill the air with joyous song. The birds are like the temple singers, whose *hallel*s to *Yahweh Sabaoth*—King and God—are never ending. The temple courts, the site of festival celebrations and spiritual experiences of the presence of *Yahweh*, are idealized” (Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, vol. 20, Word Biblical Commentary, 358).

v. 5 *pilgrimage* “Literally it reads, ‘Happy are those whose strength is in you, the highways are in their heart.’ This ambiguous image has prompted much debate and many different translations over the years. Of course, although the language is opaque, the concept is not difficult: ‘Happy are those who find strength in God, who are committed to a life of pilgrimage toward him’ is what the psalmist seems to be saying to us” (Grant, 249).

v. 6 *Baka* “The word ‘baca’ (v. 6) means ‘balsam trees.’ The Valley of the Balsam Trees was evidently an arid region that the writer used as an example of a spiritually dry state. The pilgrim whose heart anticipated temple worship joyfully found spiritual refreshment in situations others found parched. His spiritual experience was similar to the coming of the early spring rains on that valley’s waterless ground” (Constable, 328).

v. 11 *sun and shield* “Nowhere else in the Old Testament is *Yahweh* referred to as a ‘sun,’ so the reference in this verse results in some debate among commentators regarding the translation of this phrase. Nevertheless, images that speak of God as being or giving light are not uncommon in the Psalter (e.g., Pss 27:1; 36:9; 43:3 et al.) and, in the context of the pilgrimage theme, make abundant sense. Particularly in the ancient world, where roads (such as they were) were rough and artificial sources of light were not practicable for journeying, the idea of God’s being sun to his people is a particularly evocative image. He gives the light that pilgrims need to make the journey to Jerusalem and, for the postexilic generations who have sung this psalm, he provides the light (i.e., wisdom) they need to live life. The image of God as shield is a common one in the book of Psalms (Pss 3:3; 5:12; 7:10; 18:1 et al.) and communicates the reassuring message that God watches over and protects his people in all circumstances” (Grant, 252).

v. 11 *blameless* “These words acknowledge that there is a challenge at the heart of all true worship, a challenge underlined in Jer. 5:25, where the prophet stresses that there are good things that God wishes to give to his people, but that his people are not always able to receive: ‘your sins have deprived you of good things.’ Jesus takes this one step farther when he invites his disciples to ask, to seek, and to knock, knowing that ‘If you, bad as you are, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him’ (Luke 11:13). The ‘good things’ which the psalmist believes the Lord gives are not merely quantifiable in material terms. They are the fruit of a relationship with the living God, a relationship which affects all life’s values and which is open to all who seek him in worship” (Robert Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Theological Commentary, 280).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Trust in the LORD Almighty with a humble heart that yearns to be close to him by walking in his ways and gathering with those who love 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

I love to travel and experience new places. I love the scenery, the mood of the local folks and, most of all, the different food options. Because my husband is from Rhode Island, we've tried to get back there as often as possible. We love visiting family, visiting the lighthouse where we got married, and taking the kids to experience all the wonderful Rhode Island food my husband was raised on. Even my picky eater will fill up on Olneyville Hot Wieners, Diggy's clam cakes and doughboys, coffee milk and Caçoila sandwiches. But the moment we begin to pack up, all I can think about is the Great State of Texas. There's a holistic craving for home that just can't be explained unless you live here. I need wide open spaces, wildflowers, stifling heat and tacos. As Pat Green sings, "Someday I hope to walk along heaven's street/ I'll still be looking for taco meat." Me too, Pat! Surely our craving for our heavenly home should be as strong as our craving for Tex-Mex. I want to crave God with every part of my being. I want to change my heart, and like the psalmist, crave God's presence above all. I want the craving of Sunday worship and community. I want the strength that comes from understanding His Word and His will. I want the security that comes from the familiarity of home at the feet of the Savior. Most of all, I want to model this for my children so that they, too, long for God. What are you craving more than God? What do you need to change to shift your perspective?

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Psalm 84

1. What does the psalmist compare in verse 10?
2. What would he rather be?
3. What does verse 11 say about God?

What Do You Think?

"Blessed" is mentioned 3 times in this psalm. What does it mean to be blessed? How is the psalmist blessed?

What Do You Do?

Create a game of "Would You Rather?" to play with your family. Be sure to include the comparisons in verse 10.

CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Hebrews 4:12

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

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.

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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.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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