



Hello! This guide is provided to help facilitate a clear understanding of the Bible passage with a focus on applying God's truths to our lives individually and corporately. As such we encourage you to spend at least half your time pondering and discussing questions that are application focused. While the guide has been bulked up, we still need to prepare by praying through the passage, reviewing the guide on our own, and thinking about how our group might answer questions.

Psalms - Alive to God

The goal of this series is to show and cultivate a sense in our people of being alive to God, walking with him, engaging with him and having our hearts enlarged by him.

Background of Psalm 84

Psalm 84 resonates with the sentiment of a pilgrimage psalm (Psalms 120-134) that expresses a deep longing to be in the presence of God. Christians do not need to travel to a special place to be in God's presence (see John 4:21-22). Yet this psalm articulates their yearning to experience Christ's presence.¹

Christ in Psalm 84

The beauty and glory of God's living presence is ultimately what the tabernacle stands for. This constant immediate presence of God is manifest in and through Jesus Christ, whose tabernacling among us in his perfect life and his atonement for us on the cross made it possible for us to experience this previously unimaginable access to God. Christ walks with us in our times of dryness and suffering ("valley of Baca"), and gives us new growth in such times. As God, Jesus is our "sun" and "shield" and as Man, he is the perfectly "blessed" one whose "walk is blameless" before God. Jesus is the "anointed one" of God (verse 9). Thus hidden in Christ, we as sinners redeemed by Christ have a sure basis for receiving God's favour and honour. For if God did not begrudge his own Son, "how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).²

Big Idea of the Text

This Psalm uses the intense language of love poetry to extol the beauty of the temple, not for its architectural virtues but because of God's living personal presence. This poetic affection continues into a longing for God through the image of spiritual pilgrimage, where there is growth even in the midst of suffering. Nearness to God, even in the lowest position in life, is infinitely better and sweeter than living in luxury without God.³

¹ Reformation Study Bible, NKJV, 2016 ed. p.967.

² Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller, *My Rock My Refuge*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2015, p.207.

³ *ibid.*, pp.205-7.

Goal of this Study

To encourage your CG to seek nearness to God, through constant immediate fellowship and ongoing journey with God, over against the way of the world. We are to realise that such a blessed God-infused life (verses 4 and 12) is revealed and made possible in Christ.

Icebreaker Question

What do you usually turn to when you encounter discouragement or affliction? How has that worked out for you?

Read Psalm 84:1-12 - My Soul Longs for the Courts of the Lord

¹ How lovely is your dwelling place,

O Lord of hosts!

² My soul longs, yes, faints

for the courts of the LORD;

my heart and flesh sing for joy

to the living God.

³ Even the sparrow finds a home,

and a swallow a nest for herself,

where she may lay her young,

at your altars, O LORD of hosts,

my King and my God.

⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house,

ever singing your praise! *Selah*

⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you,

in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

⁶ As they go through the *valley of Baca

they make it a place of springs;

the early rain also covers it with pools.

⁷ They go from strength to strength;

each one appears before God in Zion.

⁸ O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;

⁹ give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*

Behold our shield, O God;

look on the face of your anointed!

¹⁰ For a day in your courts is better

than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in

the house of my God

than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield;

The LORD bestows favour and honour.

No good thing does he withhold

from those who walk uprightly.
¹² O LORD of hosts,
blessed is the one who trusts in you!

1. How would you describe the Psalmist's relationship with God?
2. The NKJV reads the first verse as "How lovely is your tabernacle..." What is the tabernacle (v1) and what is its significance?
- 3a. How do the pilgrims make the dry valley of Baca a place of springs?
**Note:* The Valley of Baca is the name of an unknown valley which bears a similar sounding Hebrew verb meaning "to weep." As a noun, it can be also be identified as a certain kind of tree (e.g. balsam or aspen) that flourishes in dry places. The context of verse 6 indicates that the valley is dry but transformed by the joy in the pilgrims' hearts.⁴
- 3b. How does the Psalmist encourage us to relate to God in difficult seasons of our lives? (v5-7)
4. Read Hebrews 12:2. What was Jesus' pilgrimage? How was it similar or different to the pilgrimage Jews would go on in the time this Psalm was written?
5. How does Jesus' pilgrimage give us confidence to enter the true temple of God and pray to him?
6. Why can Christians take hold of the promise in v. 11 when we face difficulties in our life?
7. Why is it better to be a doorkeeper in God's house for just a day than to "dwell in the tents of wickedness" for a thousand days? (v10-12)
8. How does this Psalm encourage you to trust and seek God for everything you need?
9. Imagine having a joy that rests in God like this. How would this overflow into the lives of others?
- 10a. How does this Psalm encourage you to express your love for God?
- 10b. What are some ways we can do this in our lives?

Apply Practically:

Write your own poem to God expressing your love for him, because he has first loved us.

OR

⁴ Reformation Study Bible, NKJV, 2016 ed. p.968.

Sing a song together that responds to God's beauty.

Pray as a CG to love God more than anything in the world, and for you to seek his dwelling place regularly throughout the day.