

“Faith is not a light that scatters all our darkness but a lamp that guides our steps in the night.”

POPE FRANCIS



40 DAYS OF DISCOVERY

GROWING YOUR FAITH IN DARKNESS



Daily Prayer Journal

The Psalms show us how to prayer and when to pray—when tired, angry frustrated, lonely forsaken, overwhelmed as well as when joyous, full of praise, thankful, or happy. Spending time with a Psalm each day will draw you into an open and honest dialogue with God.

Read slowly, repeatedly and write your thoughts and images that come mind. Follow the prayer prompts. Review the resource “Experiencing God in the Psalms” for other ideas to experiment as you learn to pray scripture in all its raw and “subversive” emotion and glory.

WHAT ARE SOME

“TREASURES IN THE DARK”

YOU HAVE FOUND DURING
THIS SEASON OF LIFE?

ISAIAH 45:3

Introduction

Welcome to 40 Days of Discovery! Discovery! Yes, the next 40 days offers you the opportunity to grow in your faith in these challenging times. Isaiah 45:3 says, *“I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name.”* God lets a pagan king know that he has treasures in darkness and riches (hoards) in secret places, so that God’s name may be glorified.

There lies in each of us the capacity for great faith, which God wants to nurture and grow. God knows in what area your faith needs to grow, and he will use whatever means necessary to make that happen. As a loving father, he will use whatever means necessary to draw out the faith that already exists in you, but has been placed in other things. It is his desire to transfer that faith to Him. God’s tool chest is bountiful: pain and suffering, disappointments and discouragement, and the trials of others you love. Though difficult, these challenges become invitations! Our faith grows in proportion to the challenge we face and the trust we place in our God. So, the greater the difficulty or obstacle to overcome, the greater the opportunities to watch God do “Even Greater Things.”

This 40-day journey will be ground-breaking for Golden Gate. First, this is our first all-digital 40-day spiritual growth campaign, and second, the first campaign designed, written, and produced by our own Golden Gate members.

We have two primary goals for this 40-day journey together:

1. Growing faith in tough (dark) times.
2. Learning to pray by reading the Psalms.

These two goals can be accomplished by entering into and following through on three commitments.

1. Spending time with God using the Daily Devotional Journal. Each day you will dive into the prayer book of the Bible.
2. Encountering God in his word with others. A weekly Bible study taught by some great guest teachers will enlighten and offer hope to you and your friends who journey with you.
3. Adoring God in weekly corporate worship. Every Sunday at 10:15 a.m., join the Golden Gate family as we seek to bring pleasure to God in praise, prayer and preaching.

40 DAYS OF DISCOVERY

GROWING YOUR FAITH IN DARKNESS

How to Use the 40 DOD Weekly Resources

VIDEO LESSONS

- Each week, a video lesson will be released along with a downloadable lesson guide. Use the guide to follow along, jotting down the key points of the lesson. You may watch the lesson individually, with your discovery partner, or with a group. Always take the opportunity to invite someone new into your study: friends, family, co-workers, etc.
- Set a weekly time to meet with your partner or group and answer the reflection questions.
- Pray together and challenge one another to exercise the application points listed in the guide.
- Join in on the fellowship and discussion on our **Sunday Chat & Chew at 11:30am CST** where we will allow open forum and discussion.

WEEKEND SERMON NOTES

- Take notes of the weekly sermons. There is space provided with your weekly lesson to take sermon notes as well. Write any questions, immediate thoughts and comments from what you hear.
- You are welcome to join in the after church **“Chat & Chew”** on Zoom to engage with others on the sermon for the day and another topics related to the theme for the week.

DAILY PRAYER JOURNAL

- The journal offers a daily walk through the “Prayer Book” of the Bible. Each day, a passage from the Psalms based on the theme for the week allows you to absorb the prayer itself and offer it back to God.
- The Psalms show us how to pray and when to pray – when tired, angry, frustrated, lonely, forsaken, or overwhelmed, as well as when joyous, full of praise, thankful, or happy. Spending time with a psalm each day will draw you into an open and honest dialog with God. Read slowly and repeatedly. Write your thoughts and images that come to mind. Follow the prayer prompts. Review the resource *“Experiencing God in the Psalms”* for other ideas to experiment as you learn to pray scripture in all their raw and ‘subversive’ emotion and glory.

LEANING IN

Start and end your week every Monday and Friday at 6:00 a.m. with a word of encouragement highlighting the theme for the week. Several guests have been invited to share God’s word on Golden Gate’s FB Live and Free Conference call. Invite someone to join in with you as well.

SOCIAL MEDIA HASHTAG

#GG40Days2021

Please follow us on social media: [@goldengatembc](#) and post your discoveries with [#GG40Days2021](#)

DAY 8

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

PSALM 127:1-2

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.



*Let the Lord
Build the House*

PSALM 127:1-2 (ESV)

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.”

I AM
THE VINE
Remain
IN ME

JOHN 15:5

DAY 9

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

PSALM 138

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.



I will sing of your love
FOREVER

PSALM 138 (ESV)

“I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased. All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O Lord, for they have heard the words of your mouth, and they shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord. For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me. The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.”

DAY 10

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

PSALM 147:1-6

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

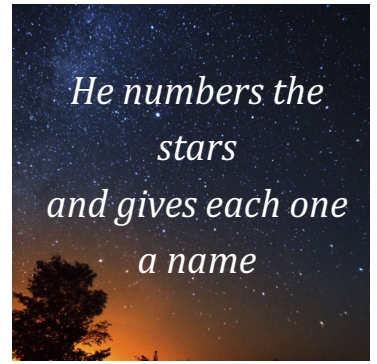
PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.



*He numbers the stars
and gives each one
a name*

PSALM 147:1-6 (ESV)

Praise the Lord!
For it is good to sing
praises to our God;
for it is pleasant, and
a song of praise is
fitting. The Lord
builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the
outcasts of Israel.
He heals the broken-
hearted and binds up
their wounds. He
determines the
number of the stars;
he gives to all of
them their names.
Great is our Lord, and
abundant in power;
his understanding is
beyond measure.
The Lord lifts up the
humble; he casts the
wicked to the ground.



**God has not
forgotten you**

DAY 11

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

PSALM 147:7-11

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.



Psalm 147:7–11, (ESV)

“Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre! He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry. His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.”

JOHN 15:9
AS THE FATHER
HAS LOVED ME,
SO HAVE I LOVED YOU.
ABIDE IN MY LOVE.

DAY 12

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

Psalm 147:12–20

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

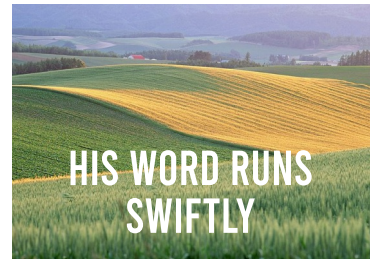
PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.



Psalm 147:12–20, (ESV)

“Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you. He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes.

He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow. He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Praise the LORD!”



DAY 13

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

PSALM 6

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.



The Lord has heard my plea;
the Lord accepts my prayer.

- Psalm 6:9

PSALM 6 (ESV)

“O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—how long? Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love. For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise? I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes. Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping. The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer. All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.”

DAY 14

Slowly and purposefully read the passage a minimum of 2-3 times.

1 SAMUEL 2:1-10

MEDITATION

Take some time to reflect on the words and phrases in the text. Underline words, phrases, or images that speak most to you? Write what comes to your mind. OR answer these questions.

What word(s) in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

PRAY

Give God what the Holy Spirit found in your heart. Pray the passage back to God in the form of a personalized prayer of adoration, confession, renewal, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, etc.

CONTEMPLATE

Read the scripture passage again, followed by this reflection: How does this passage connect with the experience of my daily life?

This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.

1 SAM. 2:1-10 (ESV)

“And Hannah prayed and said, ‘My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord.

My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. There is none holy like the Lord: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world. He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

SUGGESTED WEEKLY DISCOVERY EXERCISES

In order to encourage you to truly experience the Psalms and make them your own, complete one of the following exercises for each weekly lesson in this study. These aren't designed to create busywork, but are to stretch you spiritually. When you finish, report back to your partner or group how the exercise worked for you. Ideally, you'll vary the exercises from lesson to lesson to allow the psalms to become part of you in new ways.

1. Pray a Psalm. Select one of the psalms along the theme of the lesson. Then, using the ideas and as many of the words as seem to fit your situation, pray that prayer to God, inserting your own struggles and needs within the prayer. Go through the entire psalm, paraphrasing it as you pray it sincerely to God. Many people have exercised this kind of prayer – they pray through every Scripture passage they read. Why don't you start this practice with one of the Psalms?

2. Meditate on a Psalm. To meditate means to think deeply about something and mull it over in your mind over a period of time. You might read it several times in different translations. Say it over to yourself to feel the words on your lips. Write it out longhand. Consider the meaning of each important word. Memorization is another exercise, but memorizing is a good way to meditate on a verse or a passage.

3. Read a Psalm to a Shut-in. People who are home-bound or in hospitals, nursing homes, jails, etc. need encouragement. As your exercise, read a psalm from this week's theme to a shut-in. If you read more than one, you'll be doubly blessed!

4. Paraphrase a Psalm. Write out a paraphrase of the psalm of your choosing in your own words. Try to find modern-day synonyms and thoughts that correspond to the thoughts in the psalm. Don't be afraid to be creative.

5. Write Your Own Psalm. Write your own psalm based on the theme of this lesson. You're entirely free in how you do this. Some approaches include:

- Write in the style of Hebrew poetry using thought parallelism and imagery. This will be fun, though you may find it challenging. Consult my Introduction to Psalms in the section on Hebrew Poetry before beginning.
- Write a psalm with lines that rhyme like traditional Western poetry.
- Write a psalm in free verse, not bothering to make the lines rhyme. Just express yourself to God.
- Write a psalm in Haiku style.
- Write a psalm in any style you wish. The idea here is to learn to express yourself to God more freely.

6. Sing a Psalm. Find a song, hymn, or praise chorus that relates to the theme of this chapter – and that is based on a psalm. Then sing it or lead it for your group. If you like, write your own song, or find a melody that you can use to sing the words of the song from a translation you prefer. Be creative here.

7. Prepare a Liturgy, Responsive Reading, or Choral Reading from a Psalm. Psalms are at the core of the liturgy of Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican branches of the Church. Explore adapting a psalm for public worship. You might enjoy writing the script for a choral reading of a psalm or portion of a psalm creating parts for 3 or 4 readers. Then try it out during a worship service or in your small group or class.

8. Teach or Preach a Psalm. It's hard to prepare a message for people without really getting inside the text. Teach a psalm to a class of children, youth, or adults, or preach a psalm to your congregation.

9. Memorize a Psalm. "My mind is too old to memorize!" Hogwash! Try it, but perhaps start with a short psalm, or one you've already partially memorized. It's work, but you can do it and you'll find it very spiritually enriching. In ancient days many Hebrew boys memorized the entire Psalter. **In his 90s, Billy Graham put it this way: "Over the years I've memorized many passages from the Bible, and I'm especially thankful now that I did this. I wish we gave more attention to Bible memorization in our churches today."**¹

Memorize one psalm that relates to the theme of the lesson.

¹ Billy Graham in "Quotation Marks," *Christianity Today*, June 2007, p.19.