

# 40 DAYS OF DISCOVERY

GROWING YOUR FAITH IN DARKNESS

## SESSION 4 | DISCOVERING FAITH WHEN FACING SICKNESS AND DEATH

### MATTHEW 8:5-13 | THE CENTURION

#### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the reality of sickness and death to our doorstep. Thousands have been hospitalized and many have perished.

As a result, there are few who have not been affected by this disease. There are those to whom sickness and death have been real threats even before the COVID-19 crisis: those battling cancer, chronic illness, etc. Those who do not have access to needed health care and treatment also suffer. Not only do such stresses cause physical ailment but also strain our mental health, increasing anxiety. Because of The Fall (Gen 3), sickness and death are constant threats to all mankind, and unfortunately, disciples of Jesus Christ are no exception.

How can God grow our faith in such dire circumstances? How can faith be revealed in the darkness of sickness and death? In this session, we encounter an extraordinary man of faith, known only by title, and not by name. He displayed faith so strong, that even Jesus marveled. We look to his example to exercise faith in moments of sickness and death.

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 8:5-13

Background: Matthew 7:28-8:4

Key Verse: v. 10

Supporting Scriptures: Luke 7:1-10,  
John 11:25, 1 Cor. 15:26-28

#### LET'S DISCOVER!

**Seek Christ** \_\_\_\_\_ . **vv.5-6**

*"When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, 'Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.'" vv.5-6*

How your ask can make a difference in the answer. How desperate are you for the desired outcome you seek?

**Appeal to Christ as one who holds the ultimate** \_\_\_\_\_ . **vv.6,8**

*"Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." v.6*

*"But the centurion replied, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.'" v.8*

To address someone as "Lord" is to recognize one's place as servant within a master/servant relationship. In the cultural context of this scripture, a servant could also expect the providence and protection of their master. Christ is not one solution, He is the ultimate solution.

## Seek Christ with \_\_\_\_\_ . v8

*"But the centurion replied, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.'" v.8*

As a gentile, this Roman centurion knew that a Jew would not be allowed to enter his house without becoming unclean. He approached him with clear recognition of his position while still appealing to the Lord for his desired outcome.

## Submit to the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ. v9

*"For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." v.9*

The centurion understood authority. He knew first hand what it meant to be subject to another while at the same time having people under his authority. His request indicated the understanding that even Jesus was under God's authority. Under that authority, Jesus had the power to heal.

## Trust God's \_\_\_\_\_ even when he does not seem \_\_\_\_\_." v.13

*"And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.' And the servant was healed at that very moment." v.13*

Jesus connected the faith of the centurion to the outcome. Verse 13 paraphrased: *"Go; let it be done for you in the same manner as you have believed."* He believed in God's ability and authority even from afar.

## Rest in the fact that life and death are ultimately in the hands of \_\_\_\_\_ . v.13

*"And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.' And the servant was healed at that very moment." v.13*

Healing came at the command of Jesus and is, therefore, ultimately in his hands. Even if death comes as a result of sickness, Christ offers resurrection.

# CONCLUSION



Authority always involves a hierarchy. Christ is over all, including sickness and death. This is ultimately proven in His resurrection. Though it is hard, in the midst of sickness and death, we can build our faith by appealing to the greatest healer there is: Christ. God is looking for those who will trust Him; especially in times of great hardship. When we submit and yield to his authority without seeing the outcome, we build our faith and make room for his power to be displayed. As believers, we find our ultimate comfort in knowing that even death is under Christ's authority, so that those who have passed on as believers are now granted resurrection to eternal life. Christ's death and resurrection have given us hope over the greatest and final enemy: death itself (1 Cor. 15:26). Therefore, when facing sickness and death, we find hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

# QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION

1. How might you encourage someone in your sphere of influence who's been waiting on God for healing?

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Someone who is near death? \_\_\_\_\_

Someone who has lost a loved one? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. When was a time that you recall praying harder than ever for personal healing or for a loved one?

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3. Jesus Christ is Lord. Take an honest assessment: Is there any area of your life where that is not evident?

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4. How does the truth of the resurrection affect your perspective on death?

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## APPLICATION

- Mental health has become on the rise since the COVID-19 outbreak. Take a moment to jot down at least three emotions that you feel (i.e., I feel sad, angry, excited, etc.).
  - Offer them to the Lord as either a prayer of thanksgiving or surrender.
- Read 1 Corinthians 1:3-4. Is there anyone in your life that is suffering from an illness? Hand write and send them a note of comfort.



Faith has an eye to see in darkness



# 40 DAYS OF DISCOVERY

GROWING YOUR FAITH IN DARKNESS

## Daily Prayer Journal

The Psalms show us how to pray 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 dialog with God.

Read slowly and repeatedly, and write your thoughts and images that come mind. Follow the prayer prompts. Review the resource *“Suggested Weekly Discovery Exercises”* on page 14 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

## WEEK 4 | DAYS 22-28

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.

# 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 for our ***Sunday Chat & Chew at 11:30am CST*** on ZOOM where we will allow open forum and discussion along with other fun and challenging activities.

## 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 other 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 the thoughts and images that come to mind. Follow the prayer prompts. Review the resource *“Suggested Weekly Discovery Exercises”* on page 14 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 22

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

## PSALM 30

### 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?

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What in this passage comforted you?

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What in this passage challenged you?

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### 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?

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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.



Accessing the  
**FAVOR**  
of God

### Psalm 30 (ESV)

I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit. Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved." By your favor, O Lord, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed. To you, O Lord, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy: "What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me! O Lord, be my helper!" You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

# DAY 23

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

## PSALM 102:1-17

### 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?

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What in this passage comforted you?

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### PRAY

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### CONTEMPLATE

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

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## Psalm 102:1-17 (ESV)

Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry come to you! Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call! For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace. My heart is struck down like grass and has withered; I forget to eat my bread. Because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my flesh. I am like a desert owl of the wilderness, like an owl of the waste places; I lie awake; I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop. All the day my enemies taunt me; those who deride me use my name for a curse. For I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink, because of your indignation and anger; for you have taken me up and thrown me down. My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass. But you, O Lord, are enthroned forever; you are remembered through-out all generations. You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come. For your servants hold her stones dear and have pity on her dust. Nations will fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory. For the Lord builds up Zion; he appears in his glory; he regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer.

# DAY 24

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

## PSALM 102:18-28

### 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?

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What in this passage comforted you?

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### PRAY

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### CONTEMPLATE

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

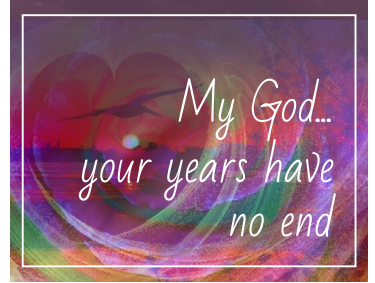
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### Psalm 102:18-28 (ESV)

Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord: that he looked down from his holy height; from heaven the Lord looked at the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die, that they may declare in Zion the name of the Lord, and in Jerusalem his praise, when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship the Lord. He has broken my strength in midcourse; he has shortened my days. "O my God," I say, "take me not away in the midst of my days—you whose years endure throughout all generations!" Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end. The children of your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before you.

# DAY 25

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

## PSALM 103:1-14

### 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?

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### PRAY

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### CONTEMPLATE

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

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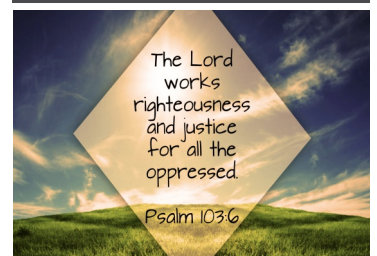
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### Psalm 103:1-14 (ESV)

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.



# DAY 26

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

## PSALM 103:15-22

### 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?

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What in this passage comforted you?

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### 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?

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### Psalm 103:15–22 (ESV)

As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments. The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul!



# DAY 27

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

## PSALM 116:1-11

### 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?

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What in this passage comforted you?

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What in this passage challenged you?

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### 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?

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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 116:1–11 (ESV)

I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.

Then I called on the name of the Lord: "O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!" Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful. The Lord preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed, even when I spoke: "I am greatly afflicted"; I said in my alarm, "All mankind are liars."



# DAY 28

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

## PSALM 116:12-19

### 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?

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What in this passage comforted you?

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What in this passage challenged you?

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### 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?

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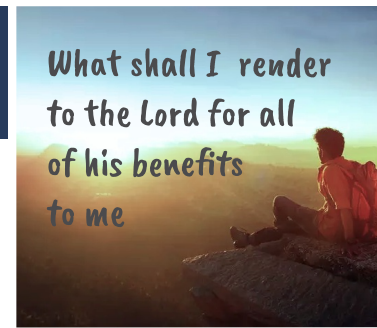
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This is God's movement towards you. Simply rest in His embrace. When your mind wanders, center yourself by returning to the spirit of the passage.

What shall I render  
to the Lord for all  
of his benefits  
to me



### Psalm 116:12-19 (ESV)

What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!

Trust me  
even in  
the storm



## 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 you 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."**<sup>1</sup>

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

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