

May 7 — The Apple of God's Eye

READ

Psalm 12-17, 19-21

Psalm 17:8-9, *"Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings from the wicked who are out to destroy me, from my mortal enemies who surround me."*

THINK

Do you ever struggle with believing that God truly loves you? That He really is madly in love with you? Not in a generic "God loves everyone" kind of way, but in an intense, deeply personal way. No matter how many times you've failed, how many times you've strayed off course, or how many times you've taken His love for granted — He still loves you! Nothing you have ever done or ever will do will change this fact.

In today's reading, David describes God's unwavering, unfailing love. So, let's focus on two vivid word pictures in David's prayer.

"Keep me as the apple of Your eye." When someone is the apple of your eye, they are your pride and joy. You love them immensely and will do anything to keep them safe and secure. And no part of the body is more carefully guarded than the eye. It is to be kept clear, unobstructed, beautiful, and useful. That is what God does for us. Although David had a uniquely high calling, God's love for him wasn't greater than His love for you. That means that you, too, are the apple of God's eye. He sees you, knows you, and wants to be included in every aspect of your life!

"Hide me in the shadow of Your wings." This is beautiful imagery of a mother bird hiding her chicks under her wings to protect them from predators and other elements. You are God's child whom He fiercely protects and defends. Nothing can snatch you from His hand; nothing can separate you from His perfect love.

One more time: GOD LOVES YOU! Believe it! You are the apple of His eye, protected under the shadow of His wings. Keep this thought in mind today, and be confident in the fact that you are a child of the Almighty!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, I'm so grateful to be the "apple of your eye" who You protect under the "shadow of Your wings." Thank You for Your unfailing love, for never letting me go. Amen.

May 8 — The Good Shepherd

READ

Psalm 22-26

Psalm 23:1-6, *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

THINK

Sheep are not known for their intellectual prowess. In fact, they're quite dumb. There was a herd in Turkey that followed one sheep off a cliff — one after another. Spectators watched in horror as 1,500 sheep plunged to their deaths. That's why it's imperative for sheep to have a good shepherd.

Whether we want to admit it or not, we are like sheep in need of a shepherd. We are prone to wandering off or thinking other pastures look more promising. When we stray, our Shepherd finds us and brings us back into His fold. Through this imagery, we can see the many ways God loves and cares about us.

First, we see that He is a God of provision. He provides for every need — spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Second, we see that our Shepherd guides us along the right path. Even when congregating among other herds, the sheep will hear their shepherd's unique call and follow. In John 10:27, Jesus says that His sheep know His voice and follow Him.

Third, our Shepherd protects us, strengthens us, and works through our difficulties for our good and His glory.

Finally, our Shepherd has made preparations for us to dine with Him at His table as honored guests. He wants to be in close fellowship with us and be included in every aspect of our lives.

Are you listening to your Shepherd's voice and following Him closely? Because God promises to lavish His lovingkindness upon our lives 24/7 and gives us the future hope of spending eternity with Him in heaven. Wow! Jesus truly is the ultimate Shepherd!

PRAY

Great Shepherd, Thank You for Your constant lovingkindness, grace, provision, protection, and presence. Help me to listen for Your voice that I may follow You closely. I need You! Amen.

May 9 — House of Peace

READ

Psalm 27-32

Psalm 27:4, *“One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple.”*

THINK

Popular advice to help relieve stress and anxiety in our lives is to take a moment and mentally go to your “happy place.” For some, that could be a beautiful beach watching the waves washing onto the sand. For others, it could be a quaint cabin on a mountainside, listening to birds and the sound of a nearby stream. Whatever that place is, it brings a sense of peace in the midst of chaos.

In many of the Psalms written by David, he is also seeking peace in the midst of stress. However, instead of seeking it in nature, David sought peace in the House of One who created nature. He knew that the true soul contentment he needed — his happy place — could only be found in the presence of God.

The world we live in seems to chase peace in everything but God’s presence. And though satisfaction or calm may be evident for a while, reality returns along with the stressors and anxieties that caused the chaos in the first place. Perhaps it's time to borrow David’s happy place and make it yours. Come experience the peace of being in the House of The Lord. Experience His presence as you worship Him alongside others. The peace only He can bring is lasting — a shield against life’s pressures and storms.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for the peace that only You can give. Help me always to remember to turn to You first when life’s stressors close in on me. I’m ready to experience Your presence in Your house and as I go through my day. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

May 10 — For a Good Outcome...

READ

Psalm 35-38

Psalm 37:1-9 *Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him. ... Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret — it leads only to evil. For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.*

THINK

We've all been told, in some form or fashion, that specific actions will lead to specific outcomes. It starts in early childhood. If you finish your dinner, you can have dessert. If you disobey, you will have to sit in time out. If you get good grades, you will be rewarded. In today's reading, David does just that. He gave the people of Israel specific action steps that would result in specific blessings.

We can learn from this promise and we see how God will also faithfully provide for us as well.

When was the last time you traded in your worry for God's peace? How about taking delight in the Lord and believing what He says about you instead of what others might say? When was the last time you chose to find joy and hope in God even though your circumstance led you to believe otherwise? How about committing to follow God, not only on Sunday morning, but throughout every day? When was the last time you chose to be still before God and wait on His timing? Are you letting go of anger and pursuing grace? How about trusting God instead of fretting over circumstances beyond your control?

Instead of wondering why you don't see God moving in your life, ask yourself, "Am I intentional in my relationship with Christ?" God wants to do so much in and through you, but just like any relationship, you have to put in work to see things happen. God is pursuing you. Are you pursuing Him? Because when you take the action steps above and press into the Lord, He will deliver on His promises every time!

PRAY

Dear God, Thank You for the promises You have made. Help me be intentional in my pursuit of having a strong personal relationship with You. Amen.

May 11 — From Terror to Triumph

READ

Psalms 39-41, 53, 55, 58

Psalm 55:2-5, *“My thoughts trouble me, and I am distraught because of what my enemy is saying, because of the threats of the wicked; for they bring down suffering on me and assail me in their anger. My heart is in anguish within me ... Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me.”*

Psalm 55:16-18, *“As for me, I call to God, and the Lord saves me. Evening, morning, and noon I cry out in distress, and He hears my voice. He rescues me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me.”*

THINK

Picture a movie where a helpless person is frozen in fear, unable to utter a word as they watch a threat grow closer and closer. Overwhelmed by horror, they can't seem to move. But, just in time, a hero rushes in and whisks the victim away to safety.

In Psalm 55, it doesn't seem as if David is experiencing a physical threat that so overwhelms him. Instead, it is words, threats, and anger that cause his suffering. Someone that David had previously enjoyed sweet fellowship with is now speaking with such venom that it invokes terror within him. In response, he cries out to God.

We may find it easy to cry out to God when a physical threat is looming large, and we are right to do so — God can work miracles! But when our hearts are anguished because we are accused or misunderstood, when negative words fly against us, how do we respond? Do we see that situation as something God can handle, or do we simply lay awake at night in restless frustration, feeling trapped with no escape?

Whatever the battle, no matter what enemy stands before us, we can cry out to God. He is the ultimate superhero, willing and able to swoop in and save us. He desires to rescue His children; He loves taking us from a place of terror to a place of triumph.

Do you need to cry out to God? Don't let any enemy come between you and the strength and power that's yours in Christ!

PRAY

Lord, You know what keeps me up at night and the words that roll around in my head, threatening to defeat me. Let no enemy have victory over me. I am YOURS, and I trust that YOU will lead me to a place of triumph for Your glory and my good. Amen.

May 12 — With Total Abandon

READ

Psalms 61-62, 64-67

Psalm 66:1-2, *“Shout for joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of His name; make His praise glorious.”*

THINK

Many of us cringe at the thought of singing in public. When we have an opportunity to join in worship by singing, we might sing quietly or not at all. But why is this? Perhaps someone has criticized us for the way we sing. Maybe we don't want to draw attention to ourselves. Whatever the reason, that little voice in our head contradicts God's voice.

God wants 100% participation. Why? When we sing His praises, something supernatural happens. Our emotions are fully engaged, our mouths speak words of truth, and our whole being produces a glorious sound to God. Don't hold back and be a spectator. Join in and rejoice in the Lord with total abandon!

PRAY

Lord, Free me from the voices in my head that hold me back from worshipping You with my entire being. I love you, Lord, with my whole heart, mind, body, and soul! Amen.

May 13 — A Perfect Heart

READ

Psalms 68-70, 86, 101

Psalm 101:2, *“I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”*

THINK

This verse has some pretty bold words — “behave wisely in a perfect way” and “with a perfect heart.” That’s a tall order! King David wrote this psalm soon after ascending to the throne, and it’s clear he wanted to dedicate his rule to God, to create a righteous kingdom modeled after God’s own. But only God could meet the standards laid out in this verse. And, indeed, David did not always have a “perfect heart.” However, the critical point isn’t that David set out to be the perfect king and failed, but that he consecrated his rule to the one true King who never fails.

To consecrate something to the Lord is to set it apart in His name, to dedicate it to Him. With David's privileged position, it would’ve been easy for him to use his power for personal gratification. He could have flaunted his power to his enemies, lined his pockets at his people’s expense, and lived a life of indulgence. But he did none of those things. He wanted to set the tone of his rule right by giving it to God.

What areas of your life do you need to consecrate to the Lord? In the different areas of your life – school, work, marriage, relationships, parenting, hobbies – are you looking for how you can honor God or how you can serve yourself? Get your heart right by allowing Him to reign in all aspects of your life — hold nothing back! When you do, you WILL have a more “perfect” heart, gain wisdom, and more aptly live out God’s best for your life!

PRAY

Lord, I consecrate my whole life to You. Be the wise and perfect One in me. I cannot do these things on my own, but in my weakness, You are strong. I praise You that You are faithful to carry out Your will! Amen