

TRUSTING CHRIST RATHER THAN THE TYRANNY OF MY CIRCUMSTANCES

Next Steps Devotional Guide — Psalm 124

Sermon Series: Seek—Pray—Turn

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Kelly Stanley

1. Think back over your life. When was there a time you believed something was true but then maybe later in life, you changed your view? What was it and what made you change?
2. Take your Bible and read all of Psalm 100. It is a Psalm of praise and worship. What does it mean to you that worship is the fuel for our relationship to God?
3. A lot of people pray. Many do so out of a sense of obligation. They view prayer as a necessary discipline of the Christian faith. But few ever experience prayer for what it really is: a way to express our love to and for God and building intimacy with God. The best place to experience worship is through prayer. Is this your experience? If so, how? if not, why?
4. Have you ever had a time in your life where you felt God was not kind to you? Where you felt God was not answering your prayers and to this day you still do not know why? How did that impact your relationship to God? Your prayer life?
5. Read Psalm 88:14-17, Psalm 44:23-25, and Psalm 39:13 from your sermon notes. These psalms by David express desperation. When and why have you ever expressed prayers of desperation to God?
6. When bad things happen, we want answers. We want an explanation. This is David in most of the Psalms up to Psalm 145. Beginning in Psalm 145, David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives us a different way to look at bad experiences: revelation and Presence. How does this change and help us to see bad, hurtful and disappointing circumstances this way?
7. Read Psalm 145:5-7 from your sermon notes. David reminds us to look at works and acts of God in history as a way to know that God is with us even when we cannot see it. Take for example the following people in the Bible (Childless Abraham and Sarah; Enslaved Joseph in Egypt; Moses wandering around in the wilderness for 40 years before God called him to go back to Egypt at the age of 85 to lead the Hebrews out; Barren Hannah; and a young shepherd boy David before he became king over Israel). How do you think they knew God was with them when they could not see it?:
8. Read Psalm 145 and compare it to Psalm 33:13 and Psalm 44:23-25 from your sermon notes. What is the difference and why?
9. Read Matthew 10:29-31 from your sermon notes. What is Jesus saying to you from this passage? Do your actions and attitudes (both public and private) show you really believe Jesus' words? Explain. For many Christians, their experiences or circumstances rather than the God revealed in Scripture affects their reaction. Which affects you more consistently? Why?
10. Read Romans 8:29 from your sermon outline under point #1 under the heading, "*What Does The Cross Show Us About God?*" When we come to the New Testament, the cross is front and center in every verse. The cross shows us God's love for us is indefinite, eternal and unconditional. You can't measure it. On the cross, Jesus is paying for our forgiveness and praying for our forgiveness. He took the guilt we bear, He took the beating we should have and He died the death we should have. The cross is a picture of how much God loves us. How aware are you of this on a daily basis? How real does the cross become to you when your circumstances are horrible? Explain.
11. God decided from the very beginning to those who came to Him, God would make them sons and daughters after His Son, Jesus. He would reinforce His image in us and put Christ's character in us. Where in your own life do you see God putting Christ's character into your own life?
12. God takes everything we experience — specially the bad stuff and He finds a way to ultimately bring good out of it. Read Psalm 145:5-6 and Psalm 145:3 from your sermon notes under point #2 /under the heading, "*What Does The Cross Show Us About God?*" How do these passages reveal this for your life
13. Trusting Christ over the tyranny of my circumstances can sometimes be a huge challenge.
 - a. Read Psalm 145:17, 20a from your sermon notes under point #1 under the heading, "*How Do I Trust Christ Over the Tyranny of My Circumstances?*" How have you seen God take the pain from your past, the disappointments from your past, and the hurts from your past and use those for good?

- b. Read Romans 8:28 from your sermon notes under point #1 under the heading, *“How Do I Trust Christ Over the Tyranny of My Circumstances?”* Now read the explanation of the Greek New Testament word translated as “know.” When you know someone on this level, it will either cause you to trust them or distrust them. How would you measure your trust level of God?
- c. Malcolm Muggeridge, who was a friend to C.S. Lewis, said this when he reached the age of 75: *“Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at the same time seemed especially desolating and painful with particular satisfaction. Indeed, I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my seventy-five years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my existence, has been through affliction and not through happiness, whether pursued or attained. In other words, if it ever were to be possible to eliminate affliction from our earthly existence by means of some drug or other medical mumbo jumbo . . . the result would not be to make life delectable, but to make it too banal and trivial to be enduring. This, of course, is what the Cross signifies. And it is the Cross, more than anything else, that has called me inexorably to Christ.”*¹ What does this quote say to you about the connection between your afflictions and your affections for Christ?
14. Read Acts 8:1b, 4, Acts 11:19, and Acts 8:1a. from your sermon notes under point #1 under the heading, *“How Do I Trust Christ Over the Tyranny of My Circumstances?”* Just as Adolf Hitler was the face of the holocaust against the Jews in WWII, Saul was the face of the holocaust against Christians in the first century. Now take your Bible and read Acts 9:1-31. What changed for Saul? Why did he change?
15. Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 from your sermon notes our sermon notes under point #1 under the heading, *“How Do I Trust Christ Over the Tyranny of My Circumstances?”* Why and how do you think Paul could keep trusting Christ instead of his circumstances?
16. Read Philippians 3:8 from your sermon notes under point #1 under the heading, *“How Do I Trust Christ Over the Tyranny of My Circumstances?”*
- a. Read the explanation of the Greek New Testament word translated as “rubbish.” How in the world could Paul say this in spite of the tyranny of his circumstances? Does this encourage and inspire you? Explain.
- b. Satan’s attempts to attack God’s people only served God’s purposes. That’s why Satan is so mad. Every plan the devil comes up with to attack the church, to attack Christians, God says, *“I’ll bring far more good from it than the evil the devil gets from it.”* The more the devil persecuted the church through Rome the faster it grew and grew and grew until 2,000 years later, and all the persecutions of the church since the early church, you are sitting here today. Do you see it? This good that is happening here has come on the backs and lives of those the devil tried to stop. What do you see from this?
- c. A.W. Tozer said: *“With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of God to plan it, and the power of God to achieve it, what do we lack?”*² What does this say to you?
- d. Do what David did. Be emotionally honest about your pain, but intellectually humble enough to accept that God has some purposes you may not understand. Both sides are important: without emotional honesty you are inauthentic; without intellectual humility, you’ll go toward unbelief. How can you do this?
17. Read Psalm 145:8-9 from your sermon notes under point #2 under the heading, *“How Do I Trust Christ Over the Tyranny of My Circumstances?”* The cross show we deserve judgment, but God gives us mercy. Some of you have a problem with the idea that there could be a loving God behind all the junk going on in the world. But what if your fundamental assumption about the world was wrong? What if, because this is God’s world, we deserve judgment for stealing it from Him through our sin and rebellion and using it for ourselves. Since that is the case, how should we look at all the goodness in the world as God’s grace to us?
18. Read Psalm 145:14-19 from your sermon notes under point #3 under the heading, *“How Do I Trust Christ Over the Tyranny of My Circumstances?”* Our God is compassionate to us when evil wins against us. We want explanation; God gives us revelation; we want answers, God gives us Presence. So, how do you worship? You meditate on the works of God, and then worship the God revealed therein. Worship is a statement you make about the character of God. You believe His works in the past; worship Him in your present situation; and then trust Him with your future. What could you do to start doing that now? Intellectual explanations and answers never resolve emotional pain. Why?
19. Trusting God for what you cannot see is your witness to the world of the love, mercy, and compassion of God. When people look at you, what does your witness tell them about God? About you?

¹<https://gralefrittheology.com/2013/08/26/36/>.

²A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*.