

Richwoods Holy Week

Prayer Experience Guide



How to Use This Guide

We hope that this prayer experience helps you encounter God in a meaningful way and express your wholly devotion to God in prayer. This guide will lead you through Psalm 22, written by King David when he was in a desperate place. For hundreds of years, Christians have connected this psalm to Jesus' crucifixion because multiple gospels record Jesus reciting the first verse of Psalm 22 on the cross.

This guide will lead you to pray and interact with the psalm in several ways. Primarily, we will invite you to engage with the way Psalm 22 moves from Lament, to Praise, to Hope. In doing this, we acknowledge that Jesus allowed two things to be true at once while he was on the cross: that he was in genuinely terrible pain and grief, while also trusting in God's faithfulness to deliver him in resurrection. This creates an example for us as his apprentices that we can be completely dependent and count on our amazing God, while also being completely honest about how we suffer or about how hard life is.

We invite you to use this guide in whatever way helps you meet God in prayer. The purpose of this guide is not to have you complete all the pages and prompts. If God meets you in praying through a particular focus, stay with the focus for as long as you need to pray. If you do not resonate with some part of the guide, that is completely fine. Bring your heart to God and ask Him what you should focus on in prayer instead.

May God bless you and speak to you as you pray with us today.

Pause Before You Begin

As you begin your prayer experience, we encourage you to spend 5 minutes to settle your heart and relax into God's presence.

Take a moment to close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Resolve in your heart to be available to God and to receive however God would like to spend this time with you.

As distractions or worries come to mind in the 5 minutes, feel free to spend a minute or so writing them in the lines below so you can relax your grip on them while you pray. Also feel free to intentionally place your concerns in God's care for the duration of the prayer experience so you can address them again afterwards.

Read Psalm 22

Read Psalm 22 slowly two times, as if you were making the words your own prayer. As you do, let a particular word or phrase prompt you to conversation with God.

What is God saying to you through this? How does this word or phrase connect with you? What do you want to say to God or what feelings do you want to express? Share these things with God throughout this prayer experience.

Psalm 22 (NLT)

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune "Doe of the Dawn."

1
My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Why are you so far away when I groan for help?

2
Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.

Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief.

3
Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

4
Our ancestors trusted in you,
and you rescued them.

5
They cried out to you and were saved.
They trusted in you and were never disgraced.

6
But I am a worm and not a man.
I am scorned and despised by all!

7
Everyone who sees me mocks me.
They sneer and shake their heads, saying,

8
"Is this the one who relies on the Lord?
Then let the Lord save him!
If the Lord loves him so much,
let the Lord rescue him!"

9
Yet you brought me safely from my mother's womb
and led me to trust you at my mother's breast.

10
I was thrust into your arms at my birth.
You have been my God from the moment I was born.

11
Do not stay so far from me,
for trouble is near,
and no one else can help me.

12
My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls;
fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in!

13
Like lions they open their jaws against me,
roaring and tearing into their prey.

14
My life is poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax,
melting within me.

15
My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay.
My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.
You have laid me in the dust and left me for
dead.

16
My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;
an evil gang closes in on me.
They have pierced my hands and feet.

17
I can count all my bones.
My enemies stare at me and gloat.

18
They divide my garments among themselves
and throw dice for my clothing.

19
O Lord, do not stay far away!
You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!

20
Save me from the sword;
spare my precious life from these dogs.

21
Snatch me from the lion's jaws
and from the horns of these wild oxen.

22
I will proclaim your name to my brothers and
sisters.
I will praise you among your assembled
people.

23
Praise the Lord, all you who fear him!
Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!
Show him reverence, all you descendants of
Israel!

24
For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering
of the needy.

He has not turned his back on them,
but has listened to their cries for help.

25
I will praise you in the great assembly.
I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those
who worship you.

26
The poor will eat and be satisfied.
All who seek the Lord will praise him.
Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

27
The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and
return to him.
All the families of the nations will bow down
before him.

28
For royal power belongs to the Lord.
He rules all the nations.

29
Let the rich of the earth feast and worship.
Bow before him, all who are mortal,
all whose lives will end as dust.

30
Our children will also serve him.
Future generations will hear about the
wonders of the Lord.

31
His righteous acts will be told to those not yet
born.
They will hear about everything he has done.

The Section of Lament

The movement of mourning and complaining makes up the first two-thirds of Psalm 22. This part of David's prayer is reprinted alongside reflection prompts and gospel accounts of Jesus' crucifixion. We encourage you to consider how you identify with these words and how Jesus identified with these words as he suffered for our sins.

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Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief.

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6
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7
Everyone who sees me mocks me.
They sneer and shake their heads, saying,

8
"Is this the one who relies on the Lord?
Then let the Lord save him!
If the Lord loves him so much,
let the Lord rescue him!"

9
Yet you brought me safely from my mother's womb
and led me to trust you at my mother's breast.

45 At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. **46** At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"
(Matthew 27: 45-46)

Notice how this psalm and Jesus linger in the anguish of grief and feeling God's absence.

As you think about a difficult situation in your life, loss etc., spend sometime telling God how you honestly, blatantly feel. Or talk to God about why being honest seems hard to you.

29 The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. "Ha! Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. **30** Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!" **31** The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself!"
(Mark 15:29-31)

10

I was thrust into your arms at my birth.
You have been my God from the moment I was born.

11

Do not stay so far from me,
for trouble is near,
and no one else can help me.

12

My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls;
fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in!

13

Like lions they open their jaws against me,
roaring and tearing into their prey.

14

My life is poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax,
melting within me.

15

My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay.
My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.
You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.

16

My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;
an evil gang closes in on me.
They have pierced my hands and feet.

17

I can count all my bones.
My enemies stare at me and gloat.

18

They divide my garments among themselves
and throw dice for my clothing

.

19

O Lord, do not stay far away!
You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!

Jesus enters into our suffering and even our feelings of being abandoned by God. How does this make you feel that Jesus can relate to us at this level?

**Meditate on this part of the prayer and see how it feels to pray it yourself:
My life is poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax, melting within me. (14)**

24 Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece. **25** It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. **26** A sign announced the charge against him. It read, "The King of the Jews."
(Mark 15:24-26)

The Section of Praise

The psalm shift to praise as a result of David's deliverance from his desperate circumstances. We encourage you to imagine Jesus proclaiming these words in victory and to let your heart rise in praise to God for His work in your life as you feel led.

22

I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters.
I will praise you among your assembled people.

23

Praise the Lord, all you who fear him!
Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!
Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!

24

For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy.
He has not turned his back on them,
but has listened to their cries for help.

25

I will praise you in the great assembly.
I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you.

26

The poor will eat and be satisfied.
All who seek the Lord will praise him.
Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

27

The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him.
All the families of the nations will bow down before him.

28

For royal power belongs to the Lord.
He rules all the nations.

This psalm goes back and forth between complaining and appreciating God's faithfulness before rising to praise. What do you feel connected to more today, lament or praise? Talk to God about this feeling for a few minutes.

Imagine what it would be like for Jesus to say or sing these words after his resurrection. And now imagine joining with him in the assembly of praise.

What is it like for you to praise God for His salvation, and taking that work as a guarantee that He will one day undo everything that is wrong with the world?

The Section of Hope

Praise and hope begin to mix together near the end of the psalm as David looks to the future. Join us as we look forward and look to God in gratitude that Sunday is Coming!

24

For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy.
He has not turned his back on them,
but has listened to their cries for help.

25

I will praise you in the great assembly.
I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship
you.

26

The poor will eat and be satisfied.
All who seek the Lord will praise him.
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The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to
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Let the rich of the earth feast and worship.
Bow before him, all who are mortal,
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30

Our children will also serve him.
Future generations will hear about the wonders
of the Lord.

31

His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born.
They will hear about everything he has done.

Notice how David's celebration of God's goodness leads him to devote and commit himself to God in verse 25. As we talk about being "Wholly Devoted", where can you draw on joy and excitement about God's work to drive your devotion to God?

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. **19** Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **20** Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Dwelling on the awesomeness of God naturally leads us to want to tell others and gives us hope for the future. Where are the places you want to have confident hope in God? Tell Him about these things.