

A
Psalm
FOR
Every
Season

30 DEVOTIONS TO
DISCOVER ENCOURAGEMENT, HOPE AND BEAUTY



Arnold R. Fleagle

Illustrations by **Timothy R. Botts**

Foreword by **Ernie Haase**

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I dedicate *A Psalm for Every Season* to Dr. Lawrence “Larry” Bradshaw, my class advisor, my English and creative writing instructor, and a committed Christian who modeled Jesus with his lips and his life. Mr. Bradshaw’s enthusiasm for my writing potential and his prompting me to express my ideas on paper extended even to his writing a letter to my parents, Ralph and Crene Fleagle, so they would be cheerleaders to motivate me to make my writings public. His influence, more than any other person, enhanced my compositions and emboldened me to publish.

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FOREWORD



I have known Pastor Arnold R. Fleagle personally for many years. This accomplished preacher and writer is, most importantly, a shepherd who deeply cares for the people Jesus died to save. We know this firsthand by his tender care of my family through many hours, prayers and visits to the hospital as we held on tight to loved ones. I am honored to say I know him as a real and genuine friend, and I am honored to write the following words about his book *A Psalm for Every Season*.

The Psalms were the Jewish songbook, the first hymnal, if you will. As a gospel singer, I have been drawn to the Psalms my whole life. To sing your faith is a wonderful gift. God's people sing! We do not stop with laments and cries for help. No, ultimately all things lead to praise, thanksgiving and singing because of our wonderful Savior! Oh, what a Savior He is.

I have read *A Psalm for Every Season* many times as a guide. Pastor Fleagle has the unique ability to use words that open the eyes of my heart to see things with fresh insight. True spiritual wisdom will do that for any seeker. And as a person who has spent

a lifetime singing and ministering through song, I am so grateful to have this book to keep my heart in tune.

No matter what season of life you find yourself in, *A Psalm for Every Season* will lead you to your Savior and help you find your voice to sing, sing, SING!

Ernie Haase, Grammy-nominated
and Dove Award-winning gospel singer

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I am grateful to the Lord for opening the door for this writing endeavor (Revelation 3:7). In addition, I am thankful for my agent, David Fessenden, who believed in the theme and content of this work; for Timothy Botts, who invested his outstanding talents in calligraphy and for his willingness to work with me again; and for my wife, Faye, who joined with me in supporting this publication of a book on the Psalms. Also, thanks to Chosen Books, which, through its editorial director, Kim Bangs, and her staff, made the finished product something that possessed clarity and flow!

INTRODUCTION



The word *psalms* in Hebrew means “praises”; in Greek it means “songs.” Combine the two ideas and you will find that “praise songs” aptly describes the basic themes of the poetry and prose that Israel set to music and used as a hymnbook. The many writers of the Psalms (with David being the most prominent and prolific) were often harassed and hounded, confused and critical, but they eventually seemed to return to the summit of praise. So it should be in our pilgrimage: Though we taste of sorrow, we should finish our course with the sweet morsels of joy on our lips!

The classic men of the Bible ran to the Psalms for their inspiration in their greatest triumphs and tragedies. Jonah quoted them in the fish’s belly; Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter incorporated the Psalms into his marvelous Pentecostal sermon, and Paul included their wisdom in his Roman masterpiece. Maybe we should find our way there, too. These are ancient texts, but they are profitable for contemporary living.

I have now been praying through the Psalms for over three years. The insights that the Lord has shown me are precious to me,

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and I believe they could be significant for you, as well. John Calvin wrote that the Psalms consist of “an anatomy of the soul,”¹ and I believe their truth addresses virtually every facet of the human experience.

I invite you to join me in this journey through *A Psalm for Every Season*.

PSALM 1

My Counselor

Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stand in the way of sinners,
nor sit in the company of scoffers.
Rather, his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on that law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1:1–2 NCB

THE OPENING PSALM of the Hebrew hymnbook is a theological divide: The first three verses are devoted to the saint, the next three to the sinner. It forms one of the Bible's most promising texts for believers, and one of the most punishing for unbelievers. There is no neutral ground, no demilitarized zone. You are either for God or against Him; an evergreen fruit tree or a piece of worthless chaff; bound for the Promised Land or headed for unthinkable punishment!

This psalm begins with the word *blessed*, which in the original language is in plural form, for emphasis—how many times

My Counselor

blessed is the one who avoids ungodly influences! But this positive beginning is followed swiftly on its heels by a warning about the power of negative associates and counselors. The axiom that in five years people will be products of the books they read and the friends with whom they associate is robustly endorsed by this psalm. Life is like a photograph—what and whom you leave out of the picture are just as important as what and whom you allow in it.

“Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Corinthians 15:33). One bad apple really does make the whole bunch bad. The first verse of Psalm 1 demonstrates that the progression of contact with the ungodly comprises a series of red flags—first people walk with the ungodly, then they stand and finally they sit down. What begins casually leads to conversation and ends in confinement. Our circle of friends, sooner or later, becomes our circle of counselors. Whether this is a good thing or a bad thing depends on the kind

of friends we have. “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17 LEB), but dull iron makes for dull iron.

One of the barometers of spiritual health is a person’s love affair with God’s Word. Psalm 1:2 paints a blessed individual as one who delights in God’s Word in the daylight and through the night season. The blessed person assigns a place in his or her schedule for engagement with God’s Word. Does your day start with a briefing from the Master’s manual? Are you taking time to feed on His Word daily? The daily bread of the true believer is found in digesting the Word of God—and digestion takes time! The Bible must not be a quick-fix snack food, but a meal well chewed, enjoyed and savored.

This Bible is not a road map, but it is a compass, and every committed believer must be riveted to it and piloted by it, and not detoured by a culture that is heading down a dead-end street. His flawless law leads to a formidable faith. His Word is the premiere counselor, “a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105 WEB).



Compelling Thought

The answer to the question, “Who is my counselor?” also answers the question, “What is my destiny?”

Comforting Prayer

Dear Lord,

I realize that my companions have a large role in whether my life bears fruit or is barren. Please give me discernment as I choose my herds and huddles so that my journey will be favored by Your presence and Your sweet blessing. Enable me to influence others in such a way that I will be a help, not a hindrance, to their holiness and righteousness.

PSALMS 3 *and* 4

A Strategy for Sleep

I lie down and sleep;

I wake again because the LORD sustains me.

Psalm 3:5 CSB

I will both lie down and sleep in peace,

for you alone, LORD, make me live in safety.

Psalm 4:8 CSB



DAVID WAS THE MOST POWERFUL personality of his era. As king of Israel, he embarrassed his people's enemies, extended the country's boundaries and escalated the nation's wealth. However, he reveals in Psalms 3 and 4 that he was threatened by many adversaries. It is noteworthy that in both of these psalms, his faith in the Lord and the protection the Lord provides him are demonstrated by *sleep*!

Sleep and rest are biblical trademarks of God's blessing. Psalm 127:2 declares, "[He] gives sleep to those he loves" (CEB). However,

this blessing is not always easy to grasp. The many stresses of our modern age have interfered with the rest of many a believer. So many Christians toss and turn at night as they wrestle with realities that appear in a plurality of forms—sometimes human, sometimes natural, sometimes genetic, sometimes even demonic. The follower of Jesus Christ walks a narrow road lined with obstacles and opposition.

The superscription to Psalm 3 discloses that this writing occurred when David was fleeing from Absalom, his own son. Now, that's a prescription for wrinkled bedcovers! I cannot imagine one of my sons planning to force me out of my job so they could be named my successor, yet this was the case with David.

Absalom coveted his father's throne. He questioned his father's justice, charmed the people with politician's kisses and lured away Ahithophel, his father's counselor. Absalom deceitfully asked his father's permission to go to Hebron, all the time with the secret purpose of forming an army to overthrow David. Absalom, whose name means "father of peace," had become his father's most dangerous predator. Can you imagine how David felt when the messenger brought the shocking news that "the hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom" (2 Samuel 15:13 AMP)?

How did David leverage this incredibly disturbing development to gain the strength to lead his people and be able to sleep at night? The two psalms contain his threefold strategy:

First, he passionately prayed (Psalm 3:4; 4:1; 4:3). David communicated loudly and often because he fully expected the Lord to respond to his petitions. Do we pray with expectancy or just with panic?

Second, he had a high view of his protector: "You, LORD, are a shield around me" (3:3 ISV). The original Hebrew means a shield that completely insulated the warrior-king. Is the Lord inclusive in

A STRATEGY FOR *sleep*

His protection of His people, or is He unable to secure our position? David understood what we must believe and live by—that nothing can reach us unless it passes through His holy hands.

Third, David committed himself to abandon fear (3:6) and tenaciously trust in the Lord (4:5). He put his confidence in the One who specializes in deliverance (4:8).

The Great Physician wrote this three-part prescription for David to prevent him from experiencing insomnia: (1) passionate prayer, (2) correct theology and (3) tenacious trust.

Jesus Christ made a beautiful offer to those who were worn out by the battle of life: “Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28 CSB). Come and experience sleep in the middle of troubled times. The anxiety, panic and torment over the difficulties of life yields little resolution or change. The Father and the Son are waiting for someone to call to Them, someone to understand who They are, someone to

surrender the trouble to Them because they trust in Their power to conquer whatever or whoever surrounds them.

Augustine, the early Church father, once wrote, “Our heart is restless until it rests in Thee.”¹ May we comprehend that unchanging reality. The many adversaries of David were overcome by his one ally—his loving God!



Compelling Thought

The answer to the question, “Who is my source of safety?” also answers the question, “How well do I rest?”

Comforting Prayer

Dear Father in heaven,

You are my Protector and Refuge. My life is challenged on many fronts, and at times, I look to myself and not to You. Forgive me for my independence and assist me in casting all my cares upon You and the Lord Jesus Christ. May I sleep well, knowing that You never sleep and that all things are small to You.