

All that driving gave me plenty of time to reflect on where I was in life's journey. I had committed my life to Jesus years ago but had not surrendered totally to God's will. I was 37, starting a new career, had many doubts about my abilities, but most of all wanted direction in my life. It became a habit to pray as I drove.

I was heading to Elbow Lake, MN after putting 250+ miles in the car that day. It was 98°, blustery, and difficult to see with the blowing dirt. As I drove along, I was pleading with the Lord to let me know that he was hearing me and would answer me as I surrendered to His plans for me. Suddenly, as I rounded a curve, there was a perfect rainbow ending right in the middle of the road! It was sprinkling as I approached causing cascades of mud to slide from my wipers.

I pulled right into the rays of that magnificent rainbow, got out of the car, raised my hands, and danced! The atmosphere was full of that clean-air-smell as I praised God. The rainbow was gone as quickly as the raindrops. Looking skyward, there was not a cloud in the sky! Sometimes it is easy to forget just how crazy in love the Lord is with each of us and how magnificently He declares it to us. I knew God had heard me and would provide for my needs. Claim that love everyday as He protects and guides you. Amen

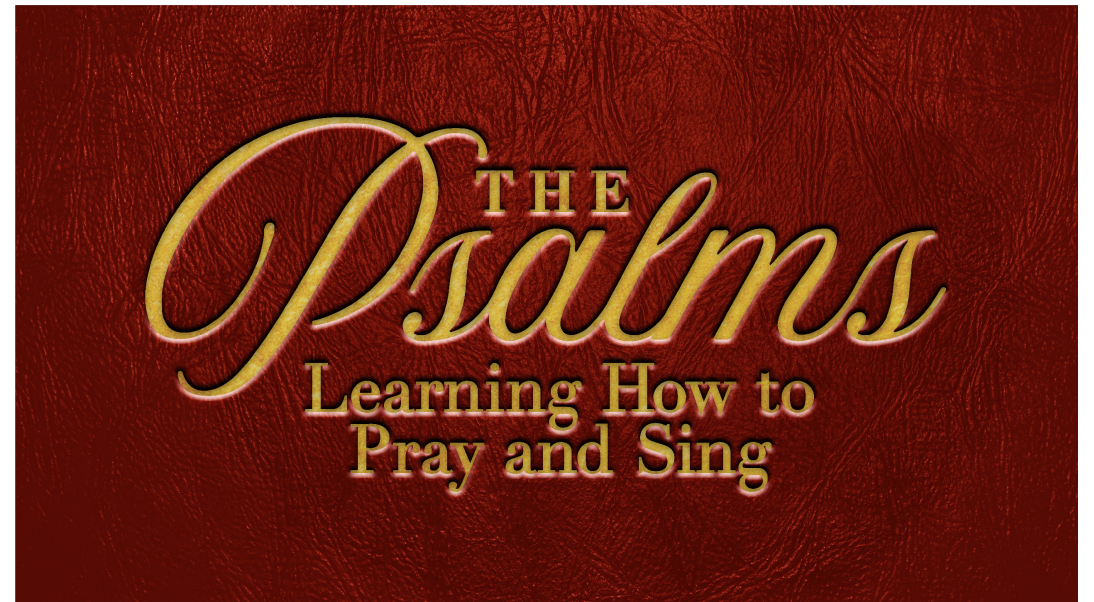
*Patty VerDouw*

**Day 20:**    **Wade In** – Psalm 88:18,   **Jump In** – Psalm 88,   **Dive In** – Psalm 87-89

Psalm 88 is a lament psalm that does not follow suit with so many others that include sections of intense sorrow followed by reminders of God's faithfulness or goodness. It is abnormal in that beyond the first seven words, "O Lord, the God who saves me," life described by the Psalmist goes from bad to worse to devastating in a matter of 18 verses. Culminating with verse 18 we can almost hear the author whimper, "You have taken away my companions and loved ones. Darkness is my closest friend."

We all face Psalm 88 moments in life and when we aren't facing them directly, we are often in relationship with someone who is. How do we walk through these seasons of hopelessness? Using the author's example: we agonize in the presence of the One who sympathizes with our suffering; we plead with the Friend who is closer than the darkness and loves us unconditionally; we cry out to God and ask impossible questions. In doing these things, we live out our faith in a unique way. When we are honest with ourselves and our Savior during dark times in our lives, we demonstrate a quiet hope. And this hope propels us toward the meaningful, trusting relationship we have with our closest Friend and Creator. So, I guess in this way darkness can be a "friend."

*Amanda Rue*



## **Week 4 Devotional - Remember Your Promise**

*God, where are you? I know you hear me and see me. Please open my eyes to see how you are at work in my life. You have been faithful before and will be faithful again. Thank you, God, for all of the ways you are faithful even when I can't see. Amen*

*Calli Hanson*

As we study the book of Psalms, you are invited to Dive Deep into God's Word, the Bible. This devotion is structured with three tiers: **Wade In, Jump In, and Dive In**. These tiers will allow every Christ-follower to dive into the word regardless of Bible knowledge or experience with this spiritual discipline.

**Wade In** - If you are unfamiliar with the Bible, new to following Jesus or just want to renew your faith, wade into the shallow end with the Bible by reading one or two verses.

**Jump In** - If you're growing in your faith and getting to know God better through your daily Bible reading plan but you know you still have a lot to learn and experience in God's Word, then jump in with a short passage of the Bible.

**Dive In** - If you've ready to get in the deep end of the pool, join us in reading longer sections of Scripture.

**Day 16:**     **Wade In** – Psalm 73:26, **Jump In** – Psalm 73, **Dive In** – Psalm 73-75

\* Psalm 73 asks why do the wicked prosper? They are successful and healthy despite their wickedness. The author admits being envious. In verse 13, questions are asked, “Did I keep my heart pure for nothing? Did I keep myself innocent for no reason?”

\* Chapter 74’s key question is, “O God, why have you rejected us so long?”

\* Chapter 75:2 God says, “At the time I have planned, I will bring justice against the wicked.” Verse 7 says, “It is God alone who judges; he decides who will rise and who will fall.”

As Christians, we too become envious of other’s success and judge how they live. We too feel rejected by God at different times of our lives. Many times, we have difficulty accepting God’s timing. We want everything now, unaware that God’s timing is better.

We need to accept that evil will always be around us. My daily Bible reading has taken me to the book of John. I have been struggling with John 14:30 where Jesus says, “the ruler of this world approaches.” I keep questioning how God allows Satan to be the ruler of this world that God created. At the end of verse 30, Jesus says, “Satan has no power over me.”

Give your entire life over to God and trust in Him and His timing. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, Satan has no power over you regardless of what evil is around you. Make verse 73:26 your verse, God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.

*Bruce Walth*

**Day 17:**     **Wade In** – Psalm 77:7-9, **Jump In** – Psalm 77, **Dive In** – Psalm 76-78

I often forget that the people who wrote the Bible were normal humans, struggling to make it through the world just like us. Psalm 77:7-9 though, are clearly words of someone in deep, deep pain and sorrow. Who hasn’t asked God these same questions?

I have, unfortunately, seen many tragedies in my life that have made me question whether God is still watching over us. I’ve asked God where He is, why He doesn’t have mercy, and why He won’t help those in need. These questions, though, have all been in the moment that I was dealing with a difficult situation.

As we learn, God is not responsible for the bad things that happen in the world. These are the unfortunate things that happen in a free world. However, God can use us to do amazing things. The passage continues in verses 10-12, “Then I thought, to this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will

remember the miracles of long ago. I will consider all your words and meditate on your mighty deeds.”

After the bad situations are over, when the world calms back down, I am able to see the bigger picture. I can remember all of the good things He has done - all of the miracles I have witnessed. And yes, I have wished that in every one of these circumstances there could be a miracle, but that can’t always be the case. But even in the tragedy, when you look closely, you can see the ways that God is working. You see grieving families comforted by friends and family members, strangers rebuilding homes lost to a natural disaster, and people at a church donating to keep a homeless shelter open.

If you are in the middle of a tragedy, remember that God loves you and wants to help – He has shown this time and time again. If you are in a place of blessing, be that miracle that someone needs. Help them see the power of God’s work through you!

*Aaron VanNingen*

**Day 18:**     **Wade In** – Psalm 79:8-9, **Jump In** – Psalm 79, **Dive In** – Psalm 79-82

When I do something, I both consider the consequences, and how others may view my actions. I often cringe at the realization that when I do something good, my motives are rarely pure. I seek validation, perhaps even congratulations for my efforts. I have to force myself to do good when no one’s looking, because doing good should never be about me, anyway. Okay, maybe a little, because I do want to please God, just like any child desires to please a parent.

And because I value how people see me, I tend to hide away my failures—my sins. I actually love the fact that I can’t hide from God, though. When the Holy Spirit convicts me of my wrong-doing, neither God nor I is surprised, so asking for forgiveness is a bit less difficult (or at least should be). Gone is the initial desire to lie or twist my motives to make it look like what I said or did was justified. If I try, God only laughs and says, “You ain’t foolin’ me. Try again.”

What the scripture above basically states is that my salvation isn’t only about me, or for my sake. It’s so God and his name can be further glorified. It kinda blows the mind a bit when looking at it that way, doesn’t it?

*Andra Marquardt*

**Day 19:**     **Wade In** – Psalm 86:1-6, **Jump In** – Psalm 86, **Dive In** – Psalm 83-86

In 1988, my job required traveling in five states. It was a hottest summer on record leaving the countryside dusty and drought plagued. The sloughs dried, dirt was blown into drifts along the fence lines as the land was baking under constant heat and cloudless skies.