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“Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths.” Psalm 25:4

**Main Idea:** Oh, Lord, I commit to you with all of my trust. Please do not let me fail in life, or disappoint you or miss what you called me to do. Rather, allow my enemies to fail and be disappointed. I have my hope in you, and I know that is what you want, so no shame comes my way. Allow those who hate you and seek ill to your children be thwarted and fail. I humbly ask you to teach me your correct true Truth, so I know what paths to take in life and what you called me to do. Save me, mold me, make me and use me, fill me and keep me always with you! Please, have mercy on me, even when I do not deserve it. Forgive me with your great wonderful mercy. Teach me clearly so I can give you glory, for I know you are loving and faithful. Help me be so, too. Please forgive me. I will always give you the utmost of respect and reverence for you are Holy. I commit my way to Your way, your promise and covenant. Lord, I am lonely and troubled, I need you always in my life. I will trust and obey you! Please calm my worries and fears and take away my sins. Please guard me from my enemies who hate you and me. I and all of your children need your rescue and deliverance. I trust in you and you are my refuge.

### Contexts and Background:

This Psalm answers the question, “What kind of person pleases God and is worthy of His guidance?” It also answers, “How do I make decisions and know God’s will?” Attributed to David, this is a lamenting Psalm, like a shepherding Psalm (22-24), with a call by God to be led by Him and only by Him. David likely offered this during one of the many times he faced traitorous enemies who were seeking to gloat in his troubles, like when he sinned with Bathsheba or when his child died. The shepherd realizes his need for a Shepherd when he went astray. Just as any wise person will know, to be a great leader is to lead people in the right way; the only way to do that is to make sure you are on the right path being rightly led yourself. In addition, this is about how one must seek the Lord, even in one’s transgressions and mistakes so to seek God’s forgiveness (2 Sam. 12).

This Psalm is an “acrostic poem,” where the verses begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This Psalm could have been collected and edited during the Babylonian exile to help people memorize this Psalm. Along with that, it is Covenantal, seeking to align God and His children to His wisdom. It was also used as a schoolbook to teach children how to read and how to live to trust and please God and seek His grace, even in captivity.

### Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

**Verses 1-7:** The passionate prayer and plea to God. We are to walk God's Way when we glorify Him; when we stray off the path, we are to seek Him. Even when this is hard to see at times, and somehow, even when one's life is taken, we are safe in Him for eternity. If you do not see God at work in your, your faithfulness and prayers are never a waste of time, be patient as God often works when we do not see it.

- *In you.* An intimate expression of our relationship with God when we are not selfish but are instead willing and deserving of His Work. Are we workable clay or hardened and unwilling to be worked?
- *My God.* God, Who is all-powerful and all present, is with and within us, allows and even loves for us to have a close personal relationship with Him (1 Sam. 8:19-f; Psalm 5).
- *My trust.* Joyful confidence in God. Scripture contains the assurance that if I repent and obey, God will act (Psalm 25; Isaiah 58:1; Proverbs 3:6).
- *Shame.* Meaning reckless folly or a kind of fool who does immoral actions and does not feel anything they did was wrong, even contempt for God. David did this with Bathsheba and Nathan confronted him with. Such receive conviction and even moral judgment from others and then feel guilty (1 Sam. 12; 25; Ecc. 2:14; Psalm 10:4; 73:11; Rom. 1:22; 3:10).
- *Enemies triumph.* God’s faithful being twisted by evil people. Disloyalty, betrayal, and unfaithfulness are some of the most painful and destructive emotions experienced by people—and by God!
- *Hopes.* Our trust needs to be on God and not on ourselves or other things!

- *Treacherous.* Meaning those who have no regard for the Lord or His people and referring to those who slander. These are cowards seeking retribution instead of truth and community.
- *Show me.* Being teachable and a learner, and being willing for self-examination and input from mature people in God. God wants to show you His Word and Ways. It is first being a learner, absorbing and applying what God has for us, then replicating that in others. We can't just learn; we need to follow through. Our selfishness, superficiality, prejudice, and pride will get in the way! (Ex. 33:13; Psalm 25:4-9; 86:11; Proverbs 9:8-9; Matthew 7:28; 11:28-29; 28: 19-20; John 7:16; 14:26; Mark 4:2; Luke 5: 1-11; Acts 16:1-4, 18:5, 19:22, 20:4; 1 Thess. 3:2-6 2 Tim. 2:2; 2 John 1:9)!
- *Your ways... your paths.* Means to seek *the will of God*, which is to earnestly and sincerely desire to please God, placing Him first and foremost, and seeking Truth as opposed to being self-seeking. God will lead you if you commit to follow Him. He leads us through the precepts of His Word, Through the Holy Spirit and through prayer and wise counsel. God's plan is best, even when we do not see it (Psalm 25:4-5,14; Isa. 45:13; Jer. 23:6; Matt. 6:33; John 2:4; 7:17; 8:44; 14:6; 18:37; 2 Cor. 11:10; Heb. 8:10; 13:21; Rev. 3:7-14).
- *Guide me.* The preparation for faith by God's lead and command. This is an appeal to God to hear us and have mercy and set us on the right path. His plan is best, not the world's or our own. We can have confidence in God. Even though it seems our prayers are not being heard or responded to, the Lord has set apart the godly for His purpose and plan, and He will answer us in His time (Psalm 25:4-5; Isa. 45:13; Jer. 23:6; John 14:26; 15:26; 2 Peter 1:21; Eph. 4:18; Rev. 1:19).
- *Make straight.* Meaning to ask God to help one be righteous. It is the realization, *I can't do this on my own; I need God's intervention and continual guidance.* This is the mark of true discipleship, the result of a God-impacted life, following Him, His precepts, and plan and seeking His purpose for our lives. God is shown as One Who protects His people; therefore, we can and must be dependent upon Him, yet still be responsible for our response to His grace and opportunities (Psalm 5:8-12; 27:11; 119:1-5, 26-33; 27:11; 139:24; 143:8-10).
- *Truth.* This means God's true Truth from His Word. For the Christian, this is the knowledge of *who, why,* and *what* concerning Christ, and it is true Truth. It is not bound to or by any human reason or tradition and can't be corrupted; but we can misrepresent it (Psalm 25:5; 43:3; John 5:8; 14:6; 15:15; Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:1-8; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18).
- *Savior.* God for deliverance of one's situation. God promises us He will come to our rescue, but it will not always be when and what we hoped for (1 Sam. 23:28; 24 :14; 25:29; 26:18).
- *Great mercy and love.* Seeking God's mercy and bring up His past dealings with others, like Abraham (Ex. 24:7).
- *Sins of my youth.* Referring to original sin, that leads to youthful lusts and bad decisions that create shortcomings, character flaws, for David a rebellious spirit and disloyalty when he sinned (Job. 13:6; Psalm 51:1).

**Verses 8-10:** David's contemplation of his situation. An example for us to be introspective and comparing our lives to God's Word. As God does not lead the immature or prideful or the rebellious; rather, those who are faithful and humble; those who submit to Him. He already knows and cares, so by faith go to him and His Way (Psalm 32:8-9; Gal. 2:20-21).

- *Good and upright / just.* Those who learned God's ways and submitted to Him.
- *Humble.* Our dependence on God. It is the understanding of our sinful nature and weaknesses which cause us to think we are better than we are, and that cause us to strive to lift ourselves above others and God (1 Kings 8:58; Psalm 25; Prov. 3:5; Luke 22:27; Gal. 6:1-2; Phil. 2:1-11; Col. 1:18; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:3-5).
- *Ways / Paths of the LORD.* Our response to Glorify God. Refers to the Sovereignty and Lordship and the Holiness and Supremacy of God and points to the uncreated, pre-existing, power of Christ. The application is for our utmost, highest reverence and our call to give Him our praise for His glory by living for Him, which

is what our purpose in life is all about (Gen. 24:27; Ex. 34:6; Deut. 6:4; 1 Kings 8:1-11; Psalm 25:10; 26:3; 73:24-28; Prov. 16:6; Matt. 17:1-8; John 1:1-14, 18; 6:25-51; 14:9; 17:5, 17:21-23; 21:15-25; Rom. 1:6-7; 11:36; 16:27; 1 Cor. 10:11, 31; Eph. 1:5-14; 2:7; Col. 2:1-5; 1 Thess. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:11-12).

- *Loving /steadfast love and faithful.* Because God is loving and faithful to us, our response must be gratitude and action with our faith. This will end our anxiety and fears.

**Verses 11-22:** An example of prayer and meditation that places the focus on God and away from our hurt and then seeks forgiveness.

- *Forgive / pardon my guilt.* Being willing to ask for forgiveness and repent of one's sins is paramount for growth. David sought it; Saul did not.
- *Fear the LORD.* This epic statement of faith means the awe and reverence we must have to God, so that our response is to trust, revere, serve, place first and foremost and worship God as LORD of all. Then, live life as it relates to faith and honor to God (Gen. 20:11; Deut. 6:4-5; Psalm 27:1; Prov. 1:7; Eccl. 12:13; Matt. 6:19-24, 33; John 10:22-42).
- *Prosperity.* A wise perspective on life, the continuation of being in God's Kingdom. This is about our relationship and communion with God and our ability to be faithful and mature. It is not about wealth or health; although, these things can happen if we are obedient, but never a sign of real success or God's blessing (Gen. 18:17; Psalm 34:10; 37:28-29; Matt. 6:33).
- *Inherit the land / seed.* God will bless, and He will curse, and the land is the platform for it as it is the food and wealth of the community. The Israelites get to steward and use the land if they are faithful to God's covenant. They went into exile for 70 years because they were not (Gen. 15:7; Deut. 1:8, 21, 39; 4:1; 6:1-2; 27:28).
- *Covenant.* God's law, also the revealed will for us people and their agreement to keep it (Gen. 12:1-3; 15; 17).
- *Great mercy and steadfast love.* In the context it is referring to God's covenant to His people are our trust in Him, not their desires of hurts.
- *My eyes are ever on the LORD.* The attitude of life that should be the goal of a mature person of faith. Who is first in your life (Psalm 25:14; Matt. 6:33; John 2:4; 8:44; 14:6; 18:37; 2 Cor. 11:10; Rev. 3:7-14)?
- *Release my feet from the snare.* David could not get out of his situation, even as king; he had to appeal to God or be like Saul and become bitter, conniving and worthless.
- *Troubles / my sins of my heart.* David realizes that his troubles are from his own bad decisions, yet he appeals to God. Times will improve; but even if they do not, I will trust in God. I know He smiles upon me and loves me; therefore, He is my joy even when my situation is not joyful. I have peace and security even when others come against me.
- *Take away all my sins.* The Jews had to be continually reminded of God's past redemptive works, so they could trust His future plan. Under the New Covenant, this is Christ's role (Ex. 12:14; Lev. 16:21; Num. 5:15; 1 Sam. 15:22; Psalm 51:16; Prov. 21:3; Isa. 1:10-17; 53:7-12; Jer. 11:15; Ezek. 40:39; 42:13; 43:18-27; 44:29; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-27; Micah 6:6-8; John 3:16; 14:15; 19:36; Rom. 8:3-4; 1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:14; 1 Pet 1:19).
- *Hope, LORD.* This alludes to God and His sovereignty. This is also our security, as we have the great loving and creating God in us. Why would we prefer our own limited, feeble ways and thinking? This is the heart of prayer, our hearts opened, our anguish, fears, hopes, and joys openly given and offered to God in Whom we trust. Honesty in prayer is essential. So, give Him your innermost fears; build yourselves up in Him (Eph. 1:4; 2:8).
- *Deliver Israel.* David was not only concerned for himself, but for the whole nation, and points to the promised Redeemer (Leviticus 26:9; Psalm 19:4; 26:11; 31:5; 34:22; 86:16; Isa. 35:10).

## **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

In order to grow in life and in ministry, we must place God and His precepts first and foremost in our lives. We need His wisdom to further empower our faith to take us through all of the journey of life, especially through our troubles, stress and suffering. If we do not seek God's wisdom, we will never grow and mature in the faith. We will not learn from our mistakes and never develop more faith from our experiences. We will, in fact, probably keep repeating the same mistakes over and over. How sad it would be to go through a great experience or even a tough time and not get anything out of it! That is how Saul handled it. David repented.

For the Christian to not be in God's Word and seek His will, would just be a waste, an empty experience void of meaning or benefit to us or others around us. Without understanding, we will neither learn His precepts, nor experience His wisdom and help. We will not be infused with faith; therefore, our fears, frustrations and failures will toss us about until we drown in anxiety and despair. Our life will have been a vapor that had little meaning or benefit--a life wasted instead of a life triumphant. What is the key? It is learning that our ways will not cut it, we must surrender to God's ways, repent, learn, grow, grow our faith in the Lord, not in our expectations (Psalm 25:4-5; Mark 9:17-27; John 16:33; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; 11:23-27; Heb. 12: 6-10; James 1:2-8)!

**Christian Life Principle:** Having our personal and spiritual priorities aligned to God's Truth will help us lead a life that is obedient, fruitful, faithful and meaningful and a ministry that glorifies God. And whatever comes our way, we trust in our Lord; the worry is not for us to have.

## **The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

## **Additional Questions:**

1. Are you workable clay or hardened brick and unwilling to be worked?
2. What kind of person pleases God and is worthy of His guidance?
3. How would you describe your relationship with God? How is it that when we are selfish we are not deserving of His Work?
4. Have you faced disloyal acquaintances or coworkers or family who were seeking to gloat in your troubles? Can you relate to David?
5. Are you teachable and a learner? God wants to show you His Word and Ways. What gets in the way? What have you done with this?
6. How does this Psalm help us make wise decisions and know God's will?
7. What did it take for you to commit to God with all of your trust? If not yet, what would?
8. If you do not see God at work in you, how can your faithfulness and prayers help you trust Him? Know that our trust and obedience is never a waste of time. Why?
9. God's plan is best, even when we do not see it. So, what do you need to do to have better "faith glasses?"
10. If you have not already, what do you need for the realization, *I can't do this on my own; I need God's intervention and continual guidance?*
11. What can you do to be better at self-examination, while looking to God's Word? How would this help you live a better life?