

## "KEEPING THE PASSION ALIVE" PSALM 63:1-11

### This Week's Core Competency

**Hope** – I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 6:19-20, *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.*

According to the superscription of Psalm 63, David wrote the psalm "when he was in the Desert of Judah." One commentator explains: "Once more the worst has brought out David's best, in words as it did in deeds. The title in the canonical text identifies the desolate scene which set these thoughts in motion, and the mention of *the king* in verse 11 points to the time when Absalom rather than Saul had made him take to *the Wilderness of Judah* on his way to the Jordan (cf. 2 Sam. 15:23)" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, TOTC, 241).

Absalom ingratiated himself with the people of Israel and presented himself as the solution to their legal grievances for four years leading up to his coup d'etat. Then, when the time was ripe, he had himself proclaimed king in Hebron. According to 2 Samuel 15:10-12, "Absalom sent secret messengers through-out the tribes of Israel to say, 'As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron.'" Two hundred men from Jerusalem had accompanied Absalom. They had been invited as guests and went quite innocently,

***The Lord has promised to be close to his own, but he also expects his children to draw close to him.***

– Willem A. VanGemenen

knowing nothing about the matter. While Absalom was offering sacrifices, he also sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, to come from Giloh, his hometown. And so the conspiracy gained strength, and Absalom's following kept on increasing." Things went from bad to worse for David until he was finally told by an unnamed messenger: "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom" (13).

At that point, David realized he and his officials could not longer remain in Jerusalem. Afraid they might be trapped in the city, the king decided to flee in order to spare its inhabitants a bloodbath. David put it this way to his officials: "Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom. We must leave immediately, or he will move quickly to overtake us and bring ruin upon us and put the city to the sword" (v. 14). With David in exile, Absalom is free to enter Jerusalem, where he sleeps with the king's concubines left in charge of the palace, signifying his assumption of royal power and making him a stench in his father's nostrils (v. 21).

To add insult to injury, as David neared Bahurim on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, Shimel cursed the king, pelting him with stones, saying, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! The LORD has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned. The LORD has handed the kingdom over to your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a man of blood!" (16:6-8).

When Abishai turned to the king and asked, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head" (v. 9), David replied, "My son, who is of my own flesh, is trying to take my life. How much more, then, this

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Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the LORD has told him to. *It may be that the LORD will see my distress and repay me with good for the cursing I am receiving today*" (vv. 11-12). In his darkest hour, David looked to God for vindication; he turned to God in hope.

The king expressed this same hope in Psalm 63. After lamenting his situation and expressing his longing for God in its opening stanza and then praising the LORD for his power and glory and for his help and protection in the following stanzas, David ended his song on a note of hope. Confident that God would vindicate him, he says in verse 9: "They who seek my life will be destroyed . . . They will be given over to the sword." And then in verse 10 he says: "But the king will rejoice in God . . . while the mouths of liars will be silenced." No wonder one commentator calls Psalm 63, "Unquestionably one of the most beautiful and touching Psalms in the whole Psalter" (J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 1:486).

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Psalm 63:1-11

A psalm of David. When he was in  
The Desert of Judah.

1 O God, you are my God,  
earnestly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you,  
my body longs for you,  
in a dry and weary land  
where there is no water.

2 I have seen you in the sanctuary  
and beheld your power and your glory.

3 Because your love is better than life,  
my lips will glorify you.

4 I will praise you as long as I live,  
and in your name I will lift up my hands.

5 My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;  
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

6 On my bed I remember you;

I think of you through the watches of the night.

7 Because you are my help,

I sing in the shadow of your wings.

8 My soul clings to you;

your right hand upholds me.

9 They who seek my life will be destroyed;  
they will go down to the depths of the earth.

10 They will be given over to the sword  
and become food for jackals.

11 But the king will rejoice in God;  
all who swear by God's name will praise him,  
while the mouths of liars will be silenced.

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Underline "soul" and "body" in v. 1.
- \* Circle "earnestly" in v. 1.
- \* Double underline "thirsts" and "longs" in v. 1.
- \* Insert "as" between "you" and "in" in v. 1.
- \* Bracket "dry and weary land" in v. 1.
- \* Circle "love" in v. 3.
- \* Box "better than" indicating *comparison* in v. 3.
- \* Circle "my lips" in v. 3.

- \* Bracket "lift up my hands" in v. 4.
- \* Box "as" indicating *comparison* in v. 5.
- \* Circle "my mouth" in v. 5.
- \* Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 7.
- \* Bracket "in the shadow of your wings" in v. 7.
- \* Circle "right hand" in v. 8.
- \* Underline "they" in vv. 9-10.
- \* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 11.

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## day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Psalm 63:1, "*earnestly* I seek you" (NIV) or "*early* will I seek you" (NKJV), which translation do you prefer and why?
2. Explain how a land described as "dry . . . where there is no water" can also be called "weary."
3. David says "I have *seen* you in the sanctuary and *beheld* your power and glory." How so?
4. Explain the *comparison* in verse 3.
5. Describe the David's response to the loyal love of God.
6. Compare the first line of verse 6 ("On my bed") to the first line of verse 1 ("early will I seek you"). What do you notice?
7. Explain the relationship between the two lines of verse 7.
8. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 11.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about David's relationship to God and your relationship to God.

## day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

By way of introduction, one commentator writes about Psalm 63: "The faith expressed in Psalms 61 and 62 reaches a climax in this marvelous hymn of David, written in the wilderness. It refers to a time when David, as king, was separated from the ark, the formal place of worship (2 Sam. 15:25). The psalmist satisfied the longing of his soul for worship by praising God for His loyal love even in his distress. As a result, he confidently anticipated a time of joy when his enemies would be stopped" (Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 839-40). The significance of being separated from the ark of the covenant for David cannot be overestimated. The ark signified the presence of God, because as the writer of 2 Samuel says, "the LORD Almighty is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark" (6:2). Wanting to live in God's presence, one of the first things David did as king was bring the ark to Jerusalem (vv. 1-23). So in one sense, separation from the ark amounted to separation from God's presence.

As far as major divisions of the psalm are concerned, most agree that it contains at least two principal parts: verses 1-8 and 9-11 (Perowne, 1:487). Most agree, as well, that the first part can be divided into two parts, and while there is no consensus among commentators regarding that division, based on the allusion to morning in verse 1, "early will I seek You" (NKJV) and to evening in verse 6, "On my bed I remember you," putting the break between verses 5 and 6 makes sense. The psalm then has three parts: verses 1-5, 6-8, and 9-11. An attractive alternative is suggested by W. Graham Scroggie, who likewise divides the psalm into three parts (verses 1-4, 5-7, and 8-11) based, however, on the recurrence of the words "my soul" (*The Psalms*, 77).

In the first part of the psalm (vv. 1-5), David describes his thirst for God and how he quenches it. He flees Jerusalem (2Sa 15:14) to escape Absalom and finds himself in the Judean wilderness away from the ark, where his parched surroundings and dire circumstances trigger an all-consuming craving for God's presence. The images and poetic parallelism he uses to express his yearning are interesting. He arrests our attention by saying, "my soul thirsts" and "my body longs," when we might expect to read it the other way around. Bodies thirst; souls long. And about his thirst, how intense is it? Using *comparison*, he underscores its intensity; he thirsts for God as one "in a dry and weary land where there is no water." One commentator explains: "The psalmist yearns for

fellowship with the Lord like one who thirsts for water after days in the desert. There is no thirst and sense of fatigue like that of a person who walks around in the desert. The arid climate rapidly saps one of strength. So strong is his physical longing for God that the psalmist had an 'appetite for God' (C. S. Lewis, 51)" (Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 489). This "appetite for God" does not appear ex nihilo. It is born out of the king's previous experience of God, i.e., the awareness of God's power and glory that overwhelmed him in the sanctuary.

Now separated from the sanctuary, David must quench his thirst for God in a deep draft of praise. He says, "Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you" (v. 3). His praise is accompanied by the lifting up of hands to receive God's blessings. David expects said blessings will leave him fully satisfied like a satiated man rising from a dinner table full of the best food. Commenting on verse 5, one writer explains: "'Praise' is the response of faith in God's perfections as they relate to his people. He expects the Lord to come through in time by an abundant provision of his needs. He expresses the bounty of deliverance in the metaphor of a banquet (cf. Isa. 25:6; Zec 9:15; Rev 19:9)" (490).

In the second part of the psalm (vv. 6-8), David returns to the opening theme, his yearning for God. Verse 6, "On my bed I remember you," together with verse 1, "early will I seek You" (NKJV), form a *merism*, a figure of speech using extremes to mean the whole, e.g., "day and night" to mean "all through the day and night." If the king's desire for God is the *first* thing on his mind in the morning and the *last* thing on his mind at night, then his pursuit of God must continue around the clock.

Next, following the pattern in the first part of the psalm, David praises God (v. 7). This time he says, "Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings" (v. 7). Put differently, because God is his help, he finds protection "in the shadow of his wings," i.e., close to him or in his presence. One writer wisely says: "The Lord has promised to be close to his own, but he also expects his children to draw close to him" (491). And because God is his help, the king "clings" to or pursues the Lord (v. 8). One commentator explains: "The word *clings* is familiar to us elsewhere in the Old Testament as 'cleaves' (e.g. Gen. 2:24, in marital devotion; Deut. 10:20, in loyalty of Yahweh); cf. Ruth 1:14 for an outstanding example of it. In the present verse it is

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strenuous: lit. 'clings after thee', as if in hot pursuit. The old translation remains the best: 'my soul followeth hard after thee But it is God himself who makes this possible, and the firmness of his upholding grasp is implied in the allusion to the right hand, the stronger of the two; cf. Isaiah 41:10. There is the same divine-human interplay in Philippians 3:8-14" (Kidner, 244).

In the last part of the psalm (vv. 9-11), David expresses his hope of vindication. "They," apparently referring to Absalom and his henchmen, will "be destroyed," "go down to the depths of earth," "be given over to the sword," and "become

food for jackals." But David and all who are loyal to him "will rejoice in God" and "will praise him" for delivering them, while their enemies will be silenced. In the end, Absalom's attempted coup d'État cost him his life. It happened this way. Before their troops met in battle, the king's son crossed paths with David's men. He was riding a mule at the time, and when the animal went under a tree, Absalom's hair became entangled in its thick branches. Joab, David's commander, and ten of Joab's armor bearers discovered Absalom alive, hanging helpless from the tree, and killed him (2Sa 18:9-18).

## *The Message of the Passage*

*Experiencing the presence of God by meditating on his power and glory  
and by praising him for his love and protection will invigorate  
your body, satisfy your soul, and give you hope.*

## day **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

**Superscription** "The title in the canonical text identifies the desolate scene which set these thoughts in motion, and the mention of the king in verse 11 points to the time when Absalom rather than Saul had made him take to the Wilderness of Judah on his way to the Jordan (cf. 2 Sam. 15:23)" (Kidner, 242).

v. 1 **soul, body** The parallel pairing of "soul" and "body" (lit., "flesh") indicates the psalmist's "whole being" longs for God. "Flesh" (see on 38:3) and 'soul' (see on 33:19) simply denote the whole man" (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms: Psalms 1-72*, NCBC, 456). "Longing for God consumes the whole being. The NIV's rendering of 'soul . . . body' reflects the MT, but it should be remembered that the Hebrew for 'soul' (*nepes*) signifies one's whole being, as does 'body' (lit., 'flesh'; cf. 84:2)" (VanGemeren, 489).

v. 1 **earnestly** The verbal phrase rendered "earnestly I seek" is derived from a Hebrew root to which the noun "dawn" is related. "This etymology gave rise to the tradition of treating Psalm 63 as a morning psalm with the translation 'early will I seek You' (NKJV; so also LXX; cf. *BDB*, 1007). The NIV correctly emphasizes the eagerness rather than the time of the 'seeking,' as the verb denotes a diligent search for godly wisdom as most important to life (cf. Pr 2:1-4; 8:17-21)" (489). "There is no compelling reason to abandon the familiar translation, early will I seek thee, which is based on the derivation of seek from the word for 'dawn', suggesting an eagerness which chimes in with the thought of 130:6 and the language of 57:8" (Kidner, 243).

v. 1 **thirsts** "Thirst is a metaphor of one's most imperative need, and therefore a good description of the righteous man's longing for God . . . The poet is as thirsty for God as an exhausted wanderer is for water in a parched desert" (Anderson, 456).

v. 1 **dry and weary** "Some understand this literally, as describing the wilderness of Judah in which David was, according to the title of the Psalm. Others suppose that the language is figurative, and expresses the spiritual thirst and weariness of one who is shut out from God's Presence in the Sanctuary. (In this last case a comparison is implied, with the not uncommon omission of the particle of comparison . . . There can be no doubt that the last is the true interpretation. Nevertheless, the figure may perhaps have been suggested by the natural objects which immediately surrounded the Psalmist, as afterward the allusion to the jackals, ver. 10" (Perowne, 1:488). "The land is Heb 'faint' or 'weary.' This may allude to the effect this dry desert has on those who are forced to live in it" (The NET Bible, 5<sup>tn</sup> on Ps 63:1).

v. 3 **love** Cf., "loving-kindness" (NKJV); steadfast love" (ESV); "loyal love" (NET). The Hebrew word (*hesed*) connotes loyalty or faithfulness to a covenant. "God's loving-kindness is that sure love which will not let Israel go. Not all Israel's persistent waywardness could ever destroy it. Though Israel be faithless, yet God remains faithful still. This steady, persistent refusal of God to wash his hands of wayward Israel is that essential meaning of the Heb. word which is translated loving-kindness" (N. H. Snaith, "Loving-Kindness," in *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, 137).

v. 3 **my lips** "Here 'lips' are mentioned as active in praise, but the whole person is meant (cf. Johnson, *VITAI*, p.46). "Mouth" is also mentioned as active in praise (v. 5). Metonymies in both cases, the sense is "I will praise you with my lips/mouth."

v. 4 **lift up my hands** "It is not so much a symbol of an uplifted heart (so Kirkpatrick) as a sign of an expectant trust that one's empty hands will be 'filled' with divine blessings" (Anderson, 457). In the words of an African pastor, "We lift up our hands because we want God to bless us."

v. 5 **shadow of your wings** I.e., "in your protection" (cf., Ps 17:8). "Most scholars assume that the metaphor is suggested by the watchful care of a mother bird, but the reference may also be to the wings of the cherubim above the Ark of the Covenant" (150).

v. 6 **On my bed** Read in light of verse 1, verse 6 suggests that David's pursuit of God continues day and night. The expressions "early will I seek You" (NKJV) and "On my bed" form a merism, a figure of speech that uses two contrasting words to refer to an entirety. Here allusions to morning and night are used to refer to the entire day.

v. 8 **your right hand** God's "right hand" connotes his *presence* (Ps 16:8, 11) and his *power* to save (20:6; 44:3; 108:6). "God's support and provision of safety were the immediate causes of David's meditation and praise. Again David pictured himself as a bird under the wing of its mother and as a dependent infant held by its parent" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Psalms," 2017 ed., 177, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)).

vv. 9-10 **they** If written when David was on the run from Absalom, "they" refers to Absalom and his followers (see 2Sa 15-18).

## Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

You know that moment when a craving hits. For me, sometimes it's chocolate, sometimes it's pizza, sometimes coffee. Most of the time it's for food, but occasionally I will have an intense longing to be outside on a beautiful day instead of cooped up inside the office. Usually these cravings do not go away until they are satisfied. As I read Psalm 63, I ask myself, how often do I crave God? Do I long to be in His Presence? Is He the only thing that will satisfy? We usually don't crave things we've never had before. If I hadn't experienced and remembered how good a dark chocolate truffle is, then I'm not going to think about it and put forth an effort to go get one. It's the same with God. Because I have been in His Presence and have experienced Him loving me, I long to be there again. Like the Psalmist I thirst for Him in a dry and weary land. It is important that we teach our kids to know about God. They should be familiar with major Bible stories and key verses. We sang the "Books of the Bible" song endlessly in my home for months! It is more important, however, that they know God personally. I want them to experience Him. How do I help them do that? The same way they learn other things, by watching me. May you find time to bask in His Presence this week.

### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Psalm 63

1. How does David describe his longing for God in verse 1?
2. What does he say God's love is better than?
3. When does David think about God? (v. 6)

### What Do You Think

It is believed that David wrote this Psalm during a very challenging time in His life. What do you do when life gets hard? Do you turn to God?

### What R U Going To Do

Illustrate one verse in this Psalm. Bring it to church for 3 extra tokens.

### Core Comp

Hope - I can cope with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus.

### Memory Verse

No memory verse this week.

## KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money** 2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** Ephesians 6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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