

"GRACE UNDER FIRE"

*This is a title change.

PSALM 27:1-14

This Week's Core Competency

Personal God – I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life. Psalm 121:1, 2

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills-
where does my help come from?
- 2 My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

That God cares about individual human beings and is involved in their personal lives is hard to believe; it simply sounds too good to be true. David could barely believe it. In comparison to the grandeur of the night sky illuminated by the moon and the stars God set in place, he asked, "What are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them?" (Ps 8:3 NLT). His words indicate one thing for sure. God's interest in mankind is inexplicable and unwarranted, not to be justified on the basis of anything about us. After all, we are creatures made "a little lower than the heavenly beings" (v. 5 NIV). It can only be comprehended on the basis of something about God, the quintessence of love. God created mankind because "God is love" (1Jn 4:8, 16). He created us out of love; he created us to love even as he, the Triune God loves. About his love one theologian writes: "The divine unity is comprised by the reciprocal self-dedication among the Trinitarian members. This corresponds to the New Testament concept of *agape* [love], which may be defined as the giving of oneself for the other.

Define yourself radically as one beloved by God.

– Brennan Manning

Consequently, the assertion that love forms the foundation of the unity in the one God opens a window on the divine reality. The unity of God is nothing less than the self-dedication of the Trinitarian persons to each other. Indeed, God is love—the divine essence is the love that binds together the Trinity" (Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 68). In simpler terms, God created us to love and be loved, to enable us to live in love as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit live in love.

If God's interest in humanity is inexplicable—"He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Mt 5:45)—his interest in *individual* humans, even his own, is even more so, and yet this is what the Bible teaches. Psalm 27 is just one example. The personal pronouns "I," "me," and "my" appear 47 times in David's short psalm, more than 3 times in every verse! In statements like the following he repeatedly alludes to his *personal* relationship with God and God's *individual* concern for him: "The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (v. 1); "One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life" (v. 4); "Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me" (v. 7); "Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path" (v. 11); "I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living" (v. 13). What's more, David's words are confirmed by Jesus, himself, who explained in similar terms why his disciples need not fear. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?" he told them. "Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very

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hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Mt 10:29-31). Every disciple is worth more to God than any sparrow, and he cares about sparrows; how much more must he care then for every disciple. Perhaps all this theology is best captured in the words of the simple yet profound children's song, *Jesus Loves Me*: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!" In light of that consider doing this: "Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. God's love for you and his choice of you constitute your worth. Accept that, and let it become the most important thing in your life" (Brennan Manning, *Abba's Child*, 51).

For Discussion

David expresses mixed emotions in Psalm 27. His confidence that the Lord is his "light and salvation" appears in verses 1-6; his concern that the Lord "not turn [him] away" surfaces in verses 7-12. Do you experience a similar tension in your relationship with God? How can it be resolved?

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

Psalm 27:1-14

1 *The LORD is my light and my salvation-
whom shall I fear?*

*The LORD is the stronghold of my life-
of whom shall I be afraid?*

2 *When evil men advance against me
to devour my flesh,
when my enemies and my foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.*

3 *Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;*

*though war break out against me,
even then will I be confident.*

4 *One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek:*

*that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,*

*to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.*

5 *For in the day of trouble*

*he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle
and set me high upon a rock.*

6 *Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;*

*at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the LORD.*

7 *Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.*

8 *My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, I will seek.*

9 *Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.*

*Do not reject me or forsake me,
O God my Savior.*

10 *Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.*

11 *Teach me your way, O LORD;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.*

12 *Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
breathing out violence.*

13 *I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.*

14 *Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.*

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

- * Circle "light and salvation" in v. 1.
- * Circle "stronghold" in v. 1.
- * Bracket "devour my flesh" in v. 2.
- * Underline "army besiege" and "war break out" in v. 3.
- * Double underline "not fear" and "be confident" in v. 3.
- * Highlight v. 4.
- * Underline "keep me safe," "hide me," and "set me high" in v. 5.
- * Draw a line across the page between verses 6 and 7.
- * Highlight verses 7 and 8.
- * Circle "face" in vv. 8, 9.
- * Circle "way" in v. 11.
- * Circle "path" in v. 11.
- * Bracket "in the land of the living" in v. 13.

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. Describe David's perception of the LORD based on your reading of verses 1 and 2.
2. Put the point of the two rhetorical questions in verse 1 in a single straightforward statement.
3. How would you describe the mood of verses 1-6? Cite examples from the text.
4. "One thing I ask of the LORD," David said. What do you infer from his reference to one thing?
5. If verse 4 doesn't mean that David aspired to be a priest, what does it mean?
6. List the *reasons* behind David's one request.
7. How would you describe the mood of verses 7-12? Cite examples from the text.
8. "Face" appears to be used figuratively in verses 8 and 9, like "house," "temple," "dwelling," and "tabernacle" in verses 4 and 5. How so?
9. What does David expect to see and when does he expect to see it?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about what waiting on the LORD looks like—perhaps from the perspective of one who has had to do that.

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

Psalm 27 can easily be divided into two parts. The division is marked by a change in mood beginning in verse 7. In verses 1-7 David expresses his confidence in God's presence; in verses 7-14 he expresses his concern regarding God's presence. Each of these parts can in turn be divided into two parts, each one containing an expression of confidence and a prayer arranged in a "crisscross" way called *chiasmus*. This structure can be set forth this way:

- A Confidence in God's Presence (vv. 1-3)
- B Prayer for God's Presence (vv. 4-6)
- B' Prayer for God's Presence (vv. 7-12)
- A' Confidence in God' Presence (vv. 13-14)

On the different moods of the different parts one commentator remarks: "Psalm 27 reads like two distinct psalms: one of testimony or confidence, perhaps occasioned by military threat (vv. 1-6), and one of prayer, perhaps occasioned by false accusation (vv. 7-14) . . . It seems odd the psalm should first make confident assertions about Yahweh's protection but then petition him repeatedly, 'Do not reject me or forsake me' and 'do not turn me over to . . . my foes'" (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 141). In any case, David doesn't presume on God's mercy; he prays for it. Confident though he may be that he will see God's goodness, he nevertheless prayerfully waits for it.

David opens the psalm by declaring in no uncertain terms that the Lord is his "light," "salvation," and "stronghold." Therefore, he has no reason to fear any number of evil men intent on his destruction. Even if an army of foes assails him, he remains confident that the LORD will "trip them up" before they get a chance to "eat him up."

His unwavering confidence resides not in himself but entirely in the LORD, which explains why he goes on to pray for God's presence. The fact that he prays for this "one thing" alone

implies that God's presence is the only thing that really matters. He mentions the LORD's "house," "temple," "dwelling," and "tabernacle" in verses 4-6, all of which allude *figuratively* to the presence of God. He yearns to live before the LORD for he knows when trouble comes, the LORD is the only one who can keep him safe, shelter him, and lift him above the fray. And whenever the Lord does exalt him above his enemies, he vows that nothing will keep him from joyfully worshiping the LORD and singing his praises.

David's mood changes dramatically in verse 7. In an anguished prayer he petitions God for immediate deliverance from unnamed violent foes. One writer comments: "The soliloquy is not an expression of self-pity but of abandonment to the Lord, who is merciful and has promised to be faithful to his servant David (2Sa 7:5-16). The grounds for the abandonment to the Lord are the covenantal name Yahweh (v. 7), the devotion of the psalmist to his loving God (v. 8), the acts of God's past loyalty as the 'helper' and 'Saviour' (v.9), and the Father-son relationship (v. 10)" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 285). David's petition for help then transitions into petitions for personal guidance and for the frustration of his enemies. "Teach me your way, O LORD, lead me in a straight path," he prays in verse 11. "Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes," he cries in verse 12.

David returns to sound a note of confidence in verse 13. In the end, he anticipates tasting God's goodness in protection, fellowship, guidance and victory during his lifetime. In the final verse, he may be addressing anyone undergoing a trial like his, or he may be speaking to himself to stiffen his resolve. "Whichever it is, the suppliant has no more to go on than the assurance that God is worth waiting for. But that is enough" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, TOTC, 139).

The Message of the Passage
Be strong and take heart, as you prayerfully wait for the Lord to rescue you from your enemies.

day **4** **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 suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“Desert Deliverance”

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 1 **light** "Light is a natural figure for almost everything that is positive, from truth and goodness to joy and vitality (e.g., respectively, Ps 43:3; Isa. 5:20; Ps 97:11; 36:9), to name but a few" (Kidner, 138). Paired with the term "salvation" it carries the nuance of our expression "light at the end of the tunnel" referring to deliverance. "The phrases 'my light' and 'my salvation' mean essentially the same thing. 'Light' and salvation' (*yesa'* GK 3829) pertain to the work of God in giving relief and victory, crowning his people with his blessing (cf. TWOT 1:414-16)" (VanGemeren, 281).
- v. 1 **whom shall I fear** "The Lord delivers and vindicates me! I fear no one! The Lord protects my life! I am afraid of no one" (NET) gets to the point of the rhetorical questions.
- v. 2 **to devour my flesh** Cf. "to eat me up" (NJB). "The wicked are often likened to beasts that devour their victims (cf. 7:2; 14:4; 17:12) . . . The NIV text note, 'to slander me,' is based on the usage in Daniel 3:8 and 6:24" (282).
- v. 4 **dwell . . . LORD** "This is not an ambition to be a priest or Levite but to enjoy the constant presence of God which is typified by their calling. Note the singleness of purpose (*one thing*)—the best answer to distracting fears (cf. 1-3)—and the priorities within that purpose: to *behold* and to *inquire*; a preoccupation with God's Person and his will. It is the essence of worship; indeed of discipleship" (Kidner, 138).
- v. 4 **temple** A number of terms are used in verses 4 and 5 to refer to the place the LORD dwells: "house," "temple," "dwelling," and "tabernacle." "The temple in view here was not Solomon's since Solomon had not yet built it. It was probably the tent that David had constructed in Jerusalem to house the ark—that was a successor to the Mosaic tabernacle—that stood at Gibeon during David's reign" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Psalms," 2013 ed., 68, www.soniclight.com). "Temple (4) is the standard word for a divine or royal residence (cf. 45:15 [Heb 16], 'palace') and need not imply that Solomon's Temple was already built. Either this word or *tent*, as the place of worship (6), is being used for its associations rather than its materials (see also on Ps. 5:7), for they cannot both be literal; note too the vivid term of verse 5, where *shelter* should perhaps be 'lair' (the same word as the lion's 'covert' in 10:9; cf. also 76:2a [Heb 3] with Amos 1:2; 3:8)" (138). "The Hebrew word means a magnificent structure, such as the tabernacle; the temple; or a palace" (Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament*, 814). The psalmist isn't trying to specify a particular structure; he is using these terms as figures of speech [*metonymy*] to refer to the LORD's presence.
- v. 4 **beauty** Cf., "kindness of the LORD (NKJV). Obviously not a reference to the LORD's appearance. "The beauty of the LORD is his favor toward his own (cf. 90:17; 135:3)" (VanGemeren, 283). "The 'kindness' of the Lord, *no'am*, is a term that is difficult to render. It means 'pleasantness,' 'graciousness' and the like. Luther thought too much in terms of worship in the sanctuary when he rendered the word 'beautiful services of the Lord.' It means nothing more than to discover anew how gracious and merciful the good Lord really is" (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 236).
- v. 5 **rock** "A rock can be both an image of a secure military position (cf. 18:2; 31:2; 94:22) and an allusion to the rock on which Yahweh's temple is founded, as the parallelism of verse 5 suggests (**his dwelling, his tabernacle**; see further on 28:1; 61:2-4)" (Broyles, 142).
- v. 8 **seek his face** "The translation of this verse can be only tentative" (see discussion in A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms: 1-72*, 224; cf., NIV text note). "To 'seek the face of the LORD' was an expression of devotion often attended by sacrifices or acts of loyalty (cf. Jer 50:4-5; Hos 3:5; Zec 8:22). The phrase 'my heart says' is an idiom for an internal form of dialogue or soliloquy (cf. 4:4; 10:6, 11, 13; 14:1; 35:25; 53:1; 74:8)" (VanGemeren, 285).
- v. 11 **straight path** Cf., "level path" (NET, NRSV, ESV); "smooth path" (NKJV); "right path" (NLT). "Not so much a way that is cleared of all possible obstacles and made easy, but a way of life that is right in the sight of God (see on 26:12)" (Anderson, 224). "David is not only a worshipper seeking God's *face* (8ff.); he is a pilgrim committed to his *way* (11), every step of it contested. He is very much in the world, and the prayer for a *level path* is not for comfort but for sure progress (as a moral term it implies what is right, or straight) when the merest slip would be exploited" (Kidner, 139).
- v. 13 **land of the living** "The reference is to this life as distinguished from the existence in Sheol or the underworld (see on 52:5)" (Anderson, 226). "David was confident that he would survive and remain alive (**in the land of the living**) to see God's blessing. Therefore he strengthened himself to **wait for the** Lord's deliverance" (Ross, 815).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Special note to parents: From April 7 to May 26, your children will be learning about families in the Old Testament in our series "Family Road Trip." During this series we will be on a journey to discover important biblical principles we can apply to our families today. Please note that kids will be studying different scriptures than the ones in the adult *Scrolls*.

Sunday we will be learning principles from the friendship of Jonathan and David (1 Samuel 20). As parents, it is our privilege to teach our kids how to be a good friend and how to have good friends. Here are a couple of thoughts to help you as you train your kids to be a good friend. (1) There are many great children's books that tell stories of friendships. Ask the librarian to recommend a few. (2) Role play different scenarios with your kids. How would a good friend respond in each situation? (3) Make a list of characteristics that a good friend might have. (4) Remind kids that we are to treat others like we want to be treated. (5) Set an example. Be a good friend yourself. (6) Spend time with friends and new people. Getting involved in a home group is a great way to do this! Your kids will see you interacting and will be learning how to build God-honoring friendships.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: 1 Samuel 20:16-42

1. Why was Saul upset that David was not at the banquet?
2. What system did Jonathan come up with to let David know if he was safe or not?
3. What does verse 17 tell you about David and Jonathan's friendship?

What Do You Think

Jonathan helped David because he knew his father was wrong in trying to hurt him.

1. Do you think that was a hard decision for him?
Faithfulness is a great friendship trait.
2. What other traits can you think of that make a person a good friend?

What R U Going To Do

Think of someone who has been a great friend to you. What makes that person such a great friend? Write him/her a note or draw a picture this week and tell them why you appreciate the friendship.

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Personal God - I believe God cares about everything in my life.

Memory Verse

Proverbs 17:17 – "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity. When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, 'The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.'"

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC _____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
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 *Psalms 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 *Psalms 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 *Psalms 95:1-7*

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

Prayer *Psalms 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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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.