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PSALM 26

Of David.

- ¹Vindicate me, O LORD,
for I have led a blameless life;
I have trusted in the LORD
without wavering.
- ²Test me, O LORD, and try me,
examine my heart and my mind;
- ³for your love is ever before me,
and I walk continually in your truth.
- ⁴I do not sit with deceitful men,
nor do I consort with hypocrites;
- ⁵I abhor the assembly of evildoers
and refuse to sit with the wicked.
- ⁶I wash my hands in innocence,
and go about your altar, O LORD,
- ⁷proclaiming aloud your praise
and telling of all your wonderful deeds.
- ⁸I love the house where you live, O LORD,
the place where your glory dwells.
- ⁹Do not take away my soul along with
sinners,
my life with bloodthirsty men,
¹⁰in whose hands are wicked schemes,
whose right hands are full of bribes.
- ¹¹But I lead a blameless life;
redeem me and be merciful to me.
- ¹²My feet stand on level ground;
in the great assembly I will praise the
LORD.

PSALM 27

Of David.

- ¹The 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?
- ²When evil men advance against me
to devour my flesh,^a
when my enemies and my foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.
- ³Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then will I be confident.

^a 2 Or to slander me

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A David psalm

- ^{26.1} **26** Clear my name, GOD;
I've kept an honest shop.
I've thrown in my lot with you, GOD, and
I'm not budging.
- ^{26.2} Examine me, GOD, from head to foot,
order your battery of tests.
Make sure I'm fit
inside and out
- ^{26.3} So I never lose
sight of your love,
But keep in step with you,
never missing a beat.
- ^{26.4-5} I don't hang out with tricksters,
I don't pal around with thugs;
I hate that pack of gangsters,
I don't deal with double-dealers.
- ^{26.6-7} I scrub my hands with purest soap,
then join hands with the others in the great
circle,
dancing around your altar, GOD,
Singing God-songs at the top of my lungs,
telling God-stories.
- ^{26.8-10} GOD, I love living with you;
your house glows with your glory.
When it's time for spring cleaning,
don't sweep me out with the quacks and
crooks,
Men with bags of dirty tricks,
women with purses stuffed with bribe-
money.
- ^{26.11-12} You know I've been aboveboard with you;
now be aboveboard with me.
I'm on the level with you, GOD;
I bless you every chance I get.

A David psalm

- ^{27.1} **27** Light, space, zest—
that's GOD!
So, with him on my side I'm fearless,
afraid of no one and nothing.
- ^{27.2} When vandal hordes ride down
ready to eat me alive,
Those bullies and toughs
fall flat on their faces.
- ^{27.3} When besieged,
I'm calm as a baby.
When all hell breaks loose,
I'm collected and cool.

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- ⁴One 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.
- ⁵For 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.
- ⁶Then 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.
- ⁷Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
- ⁸My heart says of you, "Seek his^a face!"
Your face, LORD, I will seek.
- ⁹Do 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.
- ¹⁰Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.
- ¹¹Teach me your way, O LORD;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.
- ¹²Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
breathing out violence.
- ¹³I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
- ¹⁴Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.

PSALM 28

Of David.

- ¹To you I call, O LORD my Rock;
do not turn a deaf ear to me.
For if you remain silent,
I will be like those who have gone down
to the pit.
- ²Hear my cry for mercy
as I call to you for help,

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- ^{27.4} I'm asking GOD for one thing,
only one thing:
To live with him in his house
my whole life long.
I'll contemplate his beauty;
I'll study at his feet.
- ^{27.5} That's the only quiet, secure place
in a noisy world,
The perfect getaway,
far from the buzz of traffic.
- ^{27.6} God holds me head and shoulders
above all who try to pull me down.
I'm headed for his place to offer anthems
that will raise the roof!
Already I'm singing God-songs;
I'm making music to GOD.
- ^{27.7-9} Listen, GOD, I'm calling at the top of my
lungs:
"Be good to me! Answer me!"
When my heart whispered, "Seek God,"
my whole being replied,
"I'm seeking him!"
Don't hide from me now!
- ^{27.9-10} You've always been right there for me;
don't turn your back on me now.
Don't throw me out, don't abandon me;
you've always kept the door open.
My father and mother walked out and left me,
but GOD took me in.
- ^{27.11-12} Point me down your highway, GOD;
direct me along a well-lighted street;
show my enemies whose side you're on.
Don't throw me to the dogs,
those liars who are out to get me,
filling the air with their threats.
- ^{27.13-14} I'm sure now I'll see God's goodness
in the exuberant earth.
Stay with GOD!
Take heart. Don't quit.
I'll say it again:
Stay with GOD.

A David psalm

- ^{28.1} **28** Don't turn a deaf ear
when I call you, GOD.
If all I get from you is
deafening silence,
I'd be better off
in the Black Hole.
- ^{28.2} I'm letting you know what I need,
calling out for help

^a 8 Or To you, O my heart, he has said, "Seek my

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LOVE FOR ENEMIES

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor^a and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you: Love your enemies^b and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

GIVING TO THE NEEDY

6 “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

PRAYER

⁵“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans,

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5.43-47 “You’re familiar with the old written law, ‘Love your friend,’ and its unwritten companion, ‘Hate your enemy.’ I’m challenging that. I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

5.48 “In a word, what I’m saying is, *Grow up*. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.

THE WORLD IS NOT A STAGE

6.1 **6** “Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don’t make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won’t be applauding.

6.2-4 “When you do something for someone else, don’t call attention to yourself. You’ve seen them in action, I’m sure—‘playactors’ I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that’s all they get. When you help someone out, don’t think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.

PRAY WITH SIMPLICITY

6.5 “And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?

6.6 “Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.

6.7-13 “The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They’re full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling

^a 43 Lev. 19:18 ^b 44 Some late manuscripts *enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you*

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for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

¹⁰your kingdom come,
your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us today our daily bread.

¹²Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.”

¹⁴For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

FASTING

¹⁶“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

DO NOT WORRY

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about

^a 13 Or from evil; some late manuscripts one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

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techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

Our Father in heaven,
Reveal who you are.

Set the world right;

Do what's best—

as above, so below.

Keep us alive with three square meals.

Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.

Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.

You're in charge!

You can do anything you want!

You're ablaze in beauty!

Yes. Yes. Yes.

6.14-15 “In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part.

6.16-18 “When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don't make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won't make you a saint. If you 'go into training' inwardly, act normal outwardly. Shampoo and comb your hair, brush your teeth, wash your face. God doesn't require attention-getting devices. He won't overlook what you are doing; he'll reward you well.

A LIFE OF GOD-WORSHIP

6.19-21 “Don't hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or—worse!—stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

6.22-23 “Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a dank cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have!

6.24 “You can't worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can't worship God and Money both.

6.25-26 “If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the