



# Spring Study Discussion Guide #12

**Sermon Title:** Experience the Presence of God

**Biblical Reference:** Psalm 84

**Date Preached:** Sunday, April 16th, 2023, @ 11am

**Fall Study Date:** Wednesday, April 19th, 2023

## Ice Breaker

To get to know each other as a group, let us go around the room and have everyone answer the icebreaker question.

If God suddenly granted you the ability to speak with animals, which animal would you initiate a conversation with first, and what would you ask them?

## Sermon Summary

Psalm 84 expresses the intense longing for God's presence. From the language in the Psalm, it appears as if he is writing from a place of distress. The author desires to go to God's dwelling place, and says it is better to spend a day in His presence than a thousand anywhere else. He references the Valley of Baca (a place of sorrow or difficulty.)

The presence of God is a deep sense of peace, joy, and contentment that fills our hearts and souls. It connects us to God and brings a sense of awe, reverence, and gratitude for all we have been given. An important takeaway from this Psalm is that nothing can compare to God's presence. It is the pinnacle of human experience.

The sermon focused on steps we must take to enjoy God's presence and the benefits of being in His presence. We know God desires us to be in His company. He created us, and He loves us so much that He gave His only begotten son to die for us on the cross of Calvary to make it possible for us to be in His presence.

## Quick Review

***Ask a volunteer to read the following:***

*Psa 84:1 To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!*

*Psa 84:2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

*Psa 84:3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.*

*Psa 84:4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.*

*Psa 84:5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.*

*Psa 84:6 Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.*

*Psa 84:7 They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*

*Psa 84:8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.*

*Psa 84:9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*

*Psa 84:10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

*Psa 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

*Psa 84:12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*

- What's the most surprising or thought-provoking thing you learned from the sermon or your study of this passage?

## My Testimony

Psalm 84, verse 10 reads, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." This statement emphasizes the transformative power of spending time in God's presence.

- With that in mind, can you share with us the best day you have ever spent in the presence of God and why it was so significant to you? What made that day stand out from others?

## Digging Deeper

### 1. **Dissatisfied with All Other**

Psalm 84 expresses the deep longing for God's presence in times of dissatisfaction and unfulfillment. The author desires to be in the presence of the Lord, recognizing that nothing else in this world can compare to it. The psalmist acknowledges that true satisfaction and fulfillment can only come from seeking God's presence above all else.

In an urban environment, the world, the flesh, and the devil constantly bombard people with advertisements and messages suggesting material possessions and entertainment can bring happiness. These things can work for a time. They mask the real need of our hearts. McDonald's can be satisfying and keep our hunger at bay for a short time, but it cannot give you what your body needs nutritionally.

True fulfillment can only come from God's presence. We will only seek Him once we are dissatisfied with the other things around us. In the following verse, we see the author thinking about how the Lord's place was much better. He was dissatisfied with where he was.

*Ask a volunteer to read the following:*

*Psa 84:1 To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.  
How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!*

**Discussion Questions:**

- Do you find yourself striving for material possessions, such as the latest gadgets or designer clothes, and do you feel delighted once you have acquired them?
- Do you ever feel momentarily satisfied by lesser things and then empty later? Why do you think that is?
- How would you explain that nothing other than God can satisfy you completely to a person who is unfamiliar with the Bible?
- In theory, many people in church know Jesus is the only true satisfaction, but they do not act on it. Why do you think this is? What has that looked like in your life?
- Can you tell us about a moment when you realized that you thought you were satisfied with the things of this world, but suddenly recognized that you were dissatisfied?
- Would you want people to tell you if they saw that you had satisfaction with the world? How would you want them to approach you?
- Do you believe this is a bigger problem in America than in other countries?
- What are the biggest contributing factors to people being satisfied with this world?

2. **Desire Nothing Other**

The psalmist expresses a deep longing for the Lord's courts and God's presence. His soul, mind, will, and emotions all yearn for a place where he can be in the presence of the Lord, his

flesh is even craving it. We can compare this desire to the intense thirst for water or the hunger pains for food.

The psalmist desires nothing else but to be in the presence of God, where he can lay his burdens at the altar and entrust them to the Lord's care. The presence of God is seen as the best he could experience and it was his greatest desire.

***Ask a volunteer to read the following:***

*Psa 84:2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

*Psa 84:3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.*

**Discussion Questions:**

- What, in this passage, is the most significant to you? Please explain.
- The psalmist also compares God's altar to a haven for birds to protect their young. How does God provide us with a place of safety and protection?
- The psalmist talks about the importance of being in God's courts. What practical ways to make time and space to be in God's presence in our daily lives?
- The psalmist compares his desire for God's courts to a heart longing. What are some ways we can deepen our love and affection for God?
- What does it mean to desire God's presence above all else? How can we cultivate this desire in our own lives?
- The psalmist compares his desire for God's courts to a lover's longing for their beloved. What are some ways we can deepen our love and affection for God? What biblical passages help you desire God's presence?
- How can we cultivate a desire for God's presence in our church? Are there any specific practices or habits that can help foster this desire? Can you think of any practices that hinder it?

**3. Discover It is Above All Other**

The psalmist has discovered through his experience that God's presence is incredible. He is inviting them to discover God's presence personally. Being in God's presence brings lasting

impressions and blessings, and it helps us overcome difficult circumstances. He mentions the valley of Baca, which means the valley of weeping, as a place that becomes a well of satisfaction in God's presence. The place God meets you can become a place of refreshment and grace, where our tears of sorrow turn into tears of joy.

***Ask a volunteer to read:***

*Psa 84:4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.*

*Psa 84:5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.*

*Psa 84:6 Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.*

*Psa 84:7 They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*

**Discussion Questions:**

- What, in this passage, is the most significant to you? Please explain.
- In the text, the Valley of Baca is transformed into a well and a place of refreshment. The dry place became a place with pools of water through God's presence. What places come to mind in your mind when you think of this?
- The psalmist says that those who dwell in Zion (God's presence) go from strength to strength. Can you share an experience where God's presence helped you gain strength or courage?
- Verse 5 talks about the man whose heart is in the ways of God or aligned with God. How significant is it if you are trying to spend time with the Lord and sense His presence?
- Why do you think the psalmist says that those who dwell in God's house continually praise Him?

**4. Do Something About It**

The psalmist invites the congregation to do something about it. To pray and ask the Lord to hear and to ask Him to look upon their faces. They recognize He is their Sun; He gives them light. God is their shield and protector.

***Ask a volunteer to read:***

*Psa 84:8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.*

*Psa 84:9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*

*Psa 84:10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

*Psa 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

*Psa 84:12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*

**Discussion Questions:**

- What, in this passage, is the most significant to you? Please explain.
- The psalmist chooses to leave the tents of wickedness and pursue God instead. What are some "tents of wickedness" in your life that you have/could leave behind? What tents did you struggle leaving the most?
- Why do you think he used the term "doorkeeper" in verse 10? What did he want his readers to take away?
- He declares a day with the Lord is better than a thousand spent without the Lord. Can you give me an example of how that is true? Have you experienced that?
- Verse 11 describes God as both a "sun and shield." How do these metaphors help convey the attributes of God? Give an example from your life from one of these metaphors.

## Taking It Home

The following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they felt and what they can do because of discovering the truths and principles in the text:

1. What truth or principle in this text was most impactful for you?
2. How did this truth or principle challenge, change, or affirm your thinking?
3. How will you put into practice what you have learned today?