

PETER HORROBIN

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM  
THE PSALMS



A 40-DAY  
DEVOTIONAL JOURNEY



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# INTRODUCTION

Whenever I am in need of personal encouragement, I turn to the psalms. They are a treasure chest of truth that feeds the spirit, builds up the soul and gives one the courage to press on with the business of life. The word *encouragement* means “giving someone support, confidence and hope”—and that is exactly what the psalms do.

There is a profound reason why throughout the history of God’s people, for Jew and Gentile alike, reading (or singing!) the psalms has been a daily discipline wherever and whenever believers meet. The psalms provide the encouragement we all need, because they are founded on the reality of a personal walk with God, and they build faith.

The majority of the book of Psalms is written by David—an amazing man of God who, as a boy, learned not only to worship the Lord as he cared for his sheep, but also to trust in the Lord whenever he had a need, whether that need was spiritual, emotional, relational or

even physical—when wild animals would attack his flock. God was his anchor in life; He was everything to David.

David had learned that whatever the situation, God was sufficient for his need. Something that would stand him in very good stead in many of the experiences of his remarkable life.

It is this childlike, but utterly manly, quality that God must have pointed out to Samuel when he came to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as the next king of Israel. As Samuel looked at each of the first seven sons in turn, his assumption was that one of these fine young men must be the future king that God had chosen.

But God had a different idea and said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

It was only when Samuel asked if Jesse had any other sons that the young boy, David, was brought from the hills, where he had been tending the sheep, to stand before Samuel. Then the Lord said to Samuel, “Rise and anoint him; he is the one.’ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power” (1 Samuel 16:12–13).

So when you read the psalms of David, not only are you reading the praise, worship and spiritual experiences of a boy who became a man after God’s own heart, but you are reading the words of a man on whom the Spirit of the Lord rested. It is not surprising, therefore,

that the psalms have been such a rich source of encouragement for God's people for more than three thousand years.

They will never become outdated, because they are the vibrant account of a relationship with the living God who never changes—He is the same yesterday, today and forever! And all the other psalms, written by others from the same period of history, are also hallmarked by God's inspiration and Spirit.

But the psalms are also hugely encouraging because they are not the worship songs of a man who never had any problems or who never made any mistakes. He pours out his heart to the Lord when his enemies attack or he is facing a day of trouble (see Psalm 27). And in spite of David's godliness, the earthiness of his humanity is evident throughout, perhaps no more so than in Psalm 51 when he is broken before the Lord following his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. The psalms contain the essence of a man's relationship with God through all the ups and downs of life—they are food for the soul and living water for the spirit. There is meat and drink here for every circumstance of life.

So as you use this book as a devotional of encouragement, I pray that the reality of God's living presence will pervade your spirit and that you will learn to trust the Lord yet more in all the daily experiences of walking with God day by day. We live in a fallen world that is at enmity with the living God. But when we immerse ourselves in God's Word, He will lift up our heads and enable us to say with David: "The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?" (Psalm 27:1).

## *How to Use This Book* .....

This book is laid out as a forty-step journey of faith. It is designed to be read little by little, one day at a time. Before you begin to read each day's Scripture and devotional reading, I encourage you to spend a few moments in prayer—lay aside all the concerns of the moment and ask the Holy Spirit to open up God's Word to you and to minister His truth into your inner being.

Then read the Scripture for the day—not once, but two or three times, allowing God to speak to you personally through the words from Scripture. Next, read the devotional with an open heart, asking God to show you how the things that are said can relate to events and circumstances in your own life. You may find it helpful to read the devotional through again.

At the end of each devotional is a suggested prayer that will help you anchor the daily truths into the reality of your own life. But I encourage you to pray more personally as well, applying whatever God has said to you through the devotional to your own situation.

Finally, there is a space for you to make your own personal comments about the Scripture and the devotional and keep a record of what God says to you. It has always been a huge encouragement to me to look back at the things that God has said or done in the past and track the record of God's hand on my life.

I pray that this little book will be a rich blessing to you, and that as you move on with God you will know His presence and empowering day by day.

# Day 1

## THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD



*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

*Psalm 23:1–3*

There can be no more encouraging verses of Scripture with which to begin our devotional journey. Psalm 23 is the most well known of all the psalms for this very reason—it speaks of comfort and encouragement at every stage and in every condition of life.

God is unchangeable; He cannot ever change His character. His heart is that of a Shepherd for His people, and He longs to gather His sheep into His arms and speak to them words of comfort and blessing. Isaiah 40:11 tells us that “He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently

## DAY 1

leads those that have young.” This is the heart and character of our loving Creator God.

Then Jesus told the story of the shepherd who had a hundred sheep, but one of them had strayed and was lost—so he left the 99 who were safe and went seeking the lost sheep till he found it. And what joy there was when the sheep that was lost was restored to the flock (see Luke 15:1–7)!

In all these Scriptures God is not really talking about sheep; He is talking about the people He loves and using sheep as a picture that anyone and everyone can understand, whatever age and whatever culture. It is a universal image that speaks to the very core of who we are as human beings. We all have a deep inner need of being loved, nurtured and cared for by our heavenly Father. And He is ready, willing and able!

Jesus came to show us what the Father is really like, so when He said, “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:14), He was telling us that this is how God cares for us. He then said, “I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” He knows each and every one of us and understands our situations and needs.

There are seasons in life when we have different needs, according to the stage of the journey we are walking through. Sometimes we are in need of rest in the human equivalent of walking through green pastures or lying by still waters. At those times we can take in deeply of His loving provision while He restores our souls. He wants to reequip us for the road ahead.

Then He promises to lead us along paths of righteousness—and at that point we will need to exercise our free will and choose to follow

in the direction that He is leading. Because He is a good Shepherd, He will not lead us in a direction that is contrary to His will and purpose for our lives. The heart of the message of these verses is that God can be trusted, so as we begin this forty-day journey of encouragement, let's commit ourselves right now to trust Him every step of the way.



*Thank You, Lord, that You are not only a good Shepherd but also my Shepherd. Thank You for Your promise to lead me in paths of righteousness. I choose now to follow where You lead as I trust You afresh for every day of the rest of my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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# Day 2

## HE IS WATCHING OVER YOU!



*For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

*Psalm 1:6*

Today's Scripture is a strong word of encouragement for God's people. The psalmist is saying that if we choose to walk in God's ways, He promises to watch over us.

God can see us, of course, wherever we are and whatever we are doing, even when we wander off from the way of the Lord—for we cannot escape from either His presence or His knowledge of us. But the words here, translated as “watch over,” mean much more than God seeing us or being aware of what we are doing. They contain within them a powerful promise of loving protection.

## DAY 2

Consider this example. A beach is a wonderful place for children to enjoy playing in the sand. But it is also a place of potential danger from the sea, or even from other people on the beach. So not only do Mom and Dad see their children playing on a beach, but they also watch over them—meaning that they are constantly aware of all that is happening around their children, looking out for any potential threats and at all times in a state of readiness to move quickly to act in case of danger.

I am here today only because my dad was watching over me at the beach when I was a very young boy. I wandered off and fell into a deep sea-pool. But Dad was watching over me and stretched down beneath the surface of the water and pulled me out, before the next wave could carry me away.

This is a perfect picture of what it means to watch over. The parents see what is happening—but they do more. They see and also act if the children are getting into danger and need help. They are watching over their children.

God's promise to those who choose to walk in righteousness is that He will watch over us just like this. In the earlier verses of this psalm, we read that people who walk in His ways will be like a tree that is planted by a river—one that always has fresh sustenance from the water—and as a result produces wonderful fruit.

Fruitfulness is a sure test of real spirituality. To be fruitful we need to be drawing water from the River of Life. We do this by keeping in close fellowship with the Lord and choosing to walk in His ways. The choices we make have a direct effect on both our protection and our

fruitfulness. Father God is a good gardener—He loves to watch over His fruit in each one of our lives—including yours.



*Thank You, Lord, for the wonderful promises in Your Word.  
Help me always to make the right choices and walk in Your ways  
so that my life may be very fruitful and that I may know Your  
loving protection as You watch over me. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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