

"Biblical accuracy, relatable application, and gospel focus."

Kurt Skelly



gospel

MEDITATIONS

on the

PSALMS

CHRIS ANDERSON
ABBY HUFFSTUTLER
JOE TYRPAK

THIRTY-ONE DAILY READINGS TO HELP YOU
BE GOSPEL-SATURATED ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

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MEDITATIONS
on the

PSALMS

“Gospel Meditations on the Psalms provides a healthy blend of biblical accuracy, relatable application, and gospel focus. Each of the psalm summaries will enrich deeper learning and encourage devotional living. The reader will discover the powerful simplicity of letting the gospel do its work. The devotional summaries challenged me to consider, apply, and live out the gospel principles they so poignantly explained!”

—**Kurt Skelly**, senior pastor of Faith Baptist Church, Fredericksburg, Virginia, and frequent speaker in churches, colleges, and conferences around the world

“In this devotional, Chris Anderson, Abby Huffstutler, and Joe Tyropak function as tour guides to the Psalms. They orient us to the world of the Psalms, they share with us some of their special sites, and they inspire us to travel more extensively in this sublime portion of God’s Word. Reading through these meditations will bless your soul and will encourage you to return often to the Psalms for spiritual nourishment.”

—**Dan Estes**, PhD, former pastor of Linwood Baptist Church, Worthington, Ohio, Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Cedarville University, and author of *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms*

*“The Psalms are a mirror of the human heart. They run the gamut from doubt, fear, and anger to love, joy, and hope. But they not only reveal our emotional ups and downs—they also reveal the heart of God to us in Jesus. In these *Gospel Meditations on the Psalms*, the authors faithfully unpack the text and point us to Christ as our hope and joy. Grab your Bible, and be prepared for some nourishing spiritual food.”*

—**Rhett Dodson**, PhD, pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church, Hudson, Ohio, and author of *Marching to Zion: Ancient Psalms for Modern Pilgrims*

“How can I find the gospel in the Psalms? Too often, we reduce the gospel to refer only to the part that saves us. But the gospel is the whole of Jesus’ life and ministry, and so, understood in that sense, the Psalms are a great place to find meditations on the gospel. Joe, Abby, and Chris have done an excellent job bathing our thoughts in the blessed waters of the Psalms. Each devotional is another scrub on our hearts with the brush of God’s grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

—**Matt Walker**, pastor of College Park Baptist Church, Cary, North Carolina

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The articles on Day 1 and Day 31 are edited excerpts from Chris Anderson, *Theology That Sticks: The Life-Changing Power of Exceptional Hymns* (Church Works Media, 2022).

Introduction

The Psalms are balms. They have brought help and healing to God's people for over 3,000 years. Scripture's 150 inspired songs give us words to pray during times of joy and sorrow, triumph and loss, worship and conviction. They are so vibrant, so beautiful, so real.

For these and many other reasons, we're excited to make *Gospel Meditations on the Psalms* the most recent addition to this devotional series. As always, we have labored to be expositional. We're not just commenting on small portions of select psalms, but on entire psalms. So let me urge readers to start with Scripture as you dive into each meditation—read the psalm first, then look back at it as you read our explanations. We've included verse numbers throughout the articles to help you see why we're saying what we are about these God-breathed poems. We feel the responsibility to “prove it” with the sacred text rather than just waxing eloquent about our own ideas. So we invite you to be Bereans (Acts 17:11): compare what we've written with the psalms themselves to be sure we're not making stuff up.

We hope that you'll also find the devotionals to be practical. What the psalm-writers have given us is life-changing, and so we aim to make real-life applications. Don't just read the psalms; *pray* them, *obey* them, and as you're able, *sing* them.

Finally, we have endeavored to make these meditations distinctly Christian. We don't believe that every single psalm contains an overt reference to Jesus Christ. However, we write with the conviction that God the Spirit carried along every author of Scripture in order to magnify God the Son. We write with the conviction that “the Scriptures point to” Jesus (John 5:39 NLT). So we've taken up the challenge of Isaac Watts to “Christianize” the psalms, as his introduction to his eighteenth-century psalter explains: “In all places I have kept my grand design in view; and that is to teach [the psalmist] to speak like a Christian.” With Luke 24:44–45 as our guide—and with a healthy respect for authorial intent—we have labored to show that the psalms propel us to Jesus, and we have therefore made gospel applications over and over again. We don't need just truth, or compassion, or songs—we need *Jesus*!

Joe and I are grateful to include Abby Huffstutler as a first-time author with Church Works Media. Abby's fingerprints are all over the previous devotionals in the *Gospel Meditations* series and our other books; she's our go-to copyeditor. But this time she's stepping *in front* of the curtain, writing her own articles as well as editing Joe's and mine. As a fellow word nerd and as a mature sister in Christ, her contributions to this volume are profound.

May the Lord use this little book to comfort the hurting, settle the confused, and encourage all of the redeemed to find their hope and delight in God alone. Grace!

Chris Anderson

The Secret to Happiness

READ PSALM 1

"In all that he does, he prospers." PSALM 1:3

The book of Psalms begins in a surprising way. First, it sounds a lot like a proverb. Psalm 1 contains life lessons, not jubilant praise. Second, it's a call to *happiness*. Maybe that surprises only me, but I've heard plenty of sermons telling me that God wants me to be holy, not happy. And Psalm 1 says that's just not true.

The first word of the Psalter is "blessed." It describes one who is not only fortunate, but *happy* (like the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3–12). Christianity isn't a life of morose misery. God wants you to have joy that is "full" as you share in Jesus' own joy (John 15:11; 16:24; 17:13). You may need to change your view of both Christianity and God. He is a generous and benevolent Giver of gladness! He wants you to be happy, and He tells you *how* through a series of three contrasts that will change your life.

Two Paths (Psalm 1:1–2)—The psalmist first contrasts two paths. It's unclear if they diverge in a yellow wood, but they do indeed diverge. The blessed person avoids the way of the *world* (v. 1)—our culture and its ungodly values—and chooses the way of the *Word* (v. 2). Notice the regression in verse 1: the person begins by walking by the wicked, soon is standing and listening to the wicked, and eventually ends up sitting down to join the wicked. The world promises freedom! Pleasure! The good life! But, as we will see, it delivers the opposite. Thankfully, there's another path—the way of the Word. The happy person lives according to the Bible. In fact, he *delights* in it, musing on it day and night. (More happiness!) So, will you base your life on the opinions of culture or the truths of Scripture?

Two Plants (Psalm 1:3–4)—Verses 3 and 4 reveal the consequences of the choice made in verses 1 and 2. The person who lives according to the Word is illustrated by a lush and healthy tree (v. 3). (Don't you love the symbolism of the psalms?! Few things give me more enjoyment than a beautiful tree—a towering pine, a tropical palm, or a stretching live oak. But what does the imagery *mean*? That's easy. If you live according to Scripture, your life will be good: well-watered, fruitful, and fulfilling. Who doesn't want that?! On the other hand (here's the contrast), if you live according to the world, you should expect sorrow and regret. The life of the ungodly person is dry and dead—like "chaff," the dusty husks that fall to the ground when someone is winnowing wheat (v. 4). We moderns might say that the wicked person is like a tumbleweed, a hay bale, or a dry brown lawn. Who wants a life like that?

Two Destinies (Psalm 1:5–6)—Although Psalm 1 begins with an offer of happiness, its ending is deadly serious. Remember how walking with the wicked leads to a dry, sorrowful life? What could be worse? One thing: a dry and sorrowful *eternity*. Verses 5 and 6 look beyond our life on earth to our coming judgment, and they tell us that sinners will "perish"—a description of eternal damnation. We need another option. Thankfully, God gives us a final contrast. The person who lives according to the Word (v. 2) will enjoy a fruitful life (v. 3) which will culminate in *eternal* happiness (vv. 5–6).

To be clear, the way of salvation isn't reached by a series of good choices. Rather, a happy life and a happy eternity can only be received, not earned (Ephesians 2:8–9). You don't just need a fresh start; you need *Jesus*—the ultimate "Blessed Man" Who delighted in and obeyed God's Word as Psalm 1 requires. He alone can bring you peace with God, the forgiveness of your sins, and help through life's inevitable hardships. And He will one day take you to be with Himself forever. Trusting Him with your life and eternity is the only sane choice. Right?

Let the gospel warn you away from the way of the world and show you the happiness that can only come through Jesus Christ.—CHRIS

"I Shall Not Want"

READ PSALM 23

*"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me." PSALM 23:4*

Have particular Bible passages ever become especially real to you? In January 2009, my husband presented a New Year's focus to our church: He read Psalm 23 and challenged us to make sure the Lord was our personal Shepherd. I'd known this very familiar psalm since childhood, but that year I latched onto it. I didn't know the next few years would bring multiple moves, big vocational questions, and financial hardship. But during those difficult times, I also saw concrete evidence that God is my Shepherd—an image of God woven throughout the Bible (Genesis 48:15; Psalm 28:9; Isaiah 40:11; Hebrews 13:20; Revelation 7:17). I held that psalm close and still turn to it often. What are the precious truths of Psalm 23 that comfort us in life and in death?

God's Providential Care—The psalm starts with two important words: "The LORD." This is Jehovah. The Self-existent One. And as immeasurably great as He is, He's also my personal Caregiver—*my Shepherd* (v. 1)! This metaphor is perfect. Shepherding requires a kind, gentle person—that's Jesus, the good Shepherd Who laid down His life to save His sheep (John 10). And shepherding is necessary because sheep are notoriously foolish wanderers—that's us, going our own sinful way (Isaiah 53). David takes us to a farm scene with a small stream and green grass (v. 2). There, God does what shepherds do: He gently leads us to what's good for us (v. 3). He gives us peaceful rest (v. 2) and refreshment (v. 5). And He restores us to the "paths of righteousness" (v. 3) after we've strayed. It's the pastoral setting of Jesus' Luke 15 story—where a shepherd with one hundred animals persists in rescuing *just one* who is perilously lost. The image of Jesus seeking and saving His sheep is the good news of the gospel (Luke 19:10)!

God's Constant Presence—God is with His sheep 24/7. His omnipresence is something we can hardly grasp—because we can't see Him. But this psalm tells us God is *right there* with us. When the wickedness of our world makes us afraid, God assures us that He is there and that we don't have to fear evil (v. 4). When you are near death yourself or in death's shadow as a loved one passes—God is walking in that valley with you, comforting you (v. 4). There are eight billion people on this earth, but we can still feel very lonely at times. And when we do, there is nothing like the comfort of our Shepherd beside us. Rejoice that He will never leave you.

God's Overflowing Blessing—The good Shepherd blesses His sheep until their cups are completely full—and then pours more goodness on top. Regularly, He goes beyond expectations and does good things for us—"far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). Start counting your blessings, "naming them one by one" (hymn credit: Johnson Oatman). And when you've cataloged even just a little bit of what He has done for you, you'll be amazed! Then, add in the *time* factor: God's shepherding of His children is *lifelong* and then *eternal*. His "goodness and mercy" toward us will continue as long as we are alive (v. 6). And if Jesus hasn't already returned, once we die, we'll experience the blessings of living with Him in heaven forever!

This is not just a psalm for funerals. It is a place for us to run whenever we experience need. "I shall not want" (v. 1) does not mean I will never have needs. It means I will never lack His shepherding care. If I have Jesus as my Savior from sin and death, I don't need anything or anyone else. This world offers temporary comfort in a million things, like food, friends, money, vacations, drink—but none of it satisfies like Jesus does (John 4). The reality of Psalm 23 is that God is the only true Shepherd. Our safe place is with Him.

Let the gospel comfort you with the knowledge that your Shepherd will never leave you, in this life or the next.—ABBY

Nothing *Ultimately* Bad Will Happen

READ PSALM 91

"No evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent." PSALM 91:10

Anxiety is among the most pressing of human problems. People deal with unease over all kinds of present problems such as financial debt, marital distance, wayward children, school deadlines, spiritual guilt, work load, and bodily pain. And people deal with worry over potential problems—problems that don't yet exist and which may or may not materialize. These potential worries include unknowns: *What if the market collapses? What if that person never changes? What if I lose my job? What if I never get married? What if the lab report comes back malignant? What if I fail again?*

Psalm 91 is written for the anxious. It's designed by God to help His vulnerable children feel safe. It's a song of refuge, describing what it's like to trust God when your life is threatened by various dangers (vv. 3–13). Throughout the song, God repeatedly likens Himself to a "storm shelter" in which His children hide for safety when under a tornado watch. He describes Himself as a strong fortress that protects from invading armies, as a battle shield that protects from incoming arrows, and as a bird that uses its wings to protect its young from predators. Psalm 91 assures you, if you are trusting the Lord, that "no evil shall be allowed to befall you" (v. 10). How should you understand that promise? It sounds like God is promising that He won't allow anything bad to happen to you. Is that so?

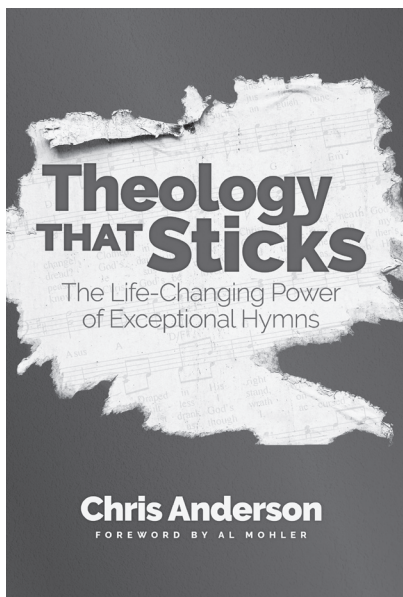
What Psalm 91 Doesn't Mean. A massive clarification is in order. Psalm 91 can't be promising that nothing bad will *ever* happen to those who trust God. That should be fairly obvious since the whole psalm itself repeatedly assumes that God's people will endure all sorts of trouble. But this elucidation was made with crystal clarity when Satan misinterpreted this passage in his temptation of Jesus. When Satan tried to make God the Son rebel against God the Father, Satan quoted (and misinterpreted) Psalm 91 (Matthew 4:5–7). The devil urged Jesus to demand that God miraculously and publicly prevent anything bad from happening to Him. But Jesus resisted Satan's temptation, and responded by humbly submitting Himself to God's will, including all the suffering that lay ahead. So, believer, you must not interpret Psalm 91 like Satan! Don't ever demand that God prove His love for you by never letting anything bad happen to you. That's not what this song is promising, and such a false belief could ruin your faith.

What Psalm 91 Does Mean. In Psalm 91, God is promising that nothing *ultimately* bad will happen to you. Christian, since Jesus bore the wrath of God that you deserved, the worst thing that could ever happen to you—experiencing "punishment with the wicked" or dying "the second death"—will never happen to you (v. 8; Revelation 20:14–15). Although you may face "tribulation, or distress, or persecution," there is absolutely nothing "in all creation [that] will be able to separate [you] from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35–39).

If Psalm 91 were a fireworks display of assurance, then verses 14–16 would be the grand finale. There God promises ultimate blessings to the person who loves Him and keeps relying on Him. Listen to the glorious explosions! *You'll be forever safe! All your cries will be answered! You'll never be alone! You'll be forever satisfied! You'll be forever saved!* Believer, there's coming a day when you'll experience God's complete salvation from every effect of sin and death—when all your tears will be wiped away and all your trials will be in the past (Revelation 7:15–17). Since that day of ultimate salvation is coming, don't give in to sinful distrust and anxiety today. Instead, sing Psalm 91, confident that temporary sorrows will yield to ultimate triumph.

Let the gospel's promises stabilize you through today's trials and tomorrow's unknowns.—JOE

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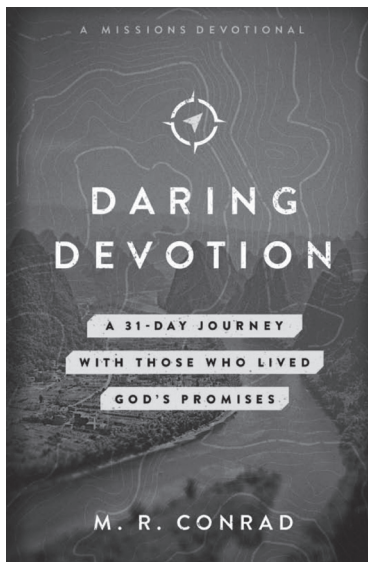


“Christians are a singing people. Our songs both express our devotion and shape us as disciples. Song selection, therefore, is a weighty task. In this warm, accessible, and persuasive book, Chris Anderson offers invaluable guidance on how to choose songs that exalt our triune God, edify His people, and contribute to evangelizing the lost. Packed with a plethora of insightful quotes and loaded with lists of hymns in every category imaginable, this volume is one I wish every pastor, church music leader, and believer would read.”

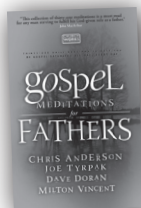
—**Matt Merker**, author, hymn-writer, and
Director of Creative Resources
and Training for Getty Music

“Here is a book I would love to put into the hands of young adults in my church so that they see that men and women who have left their mark on the mission field were like us in every way, except in their devotion to the God who called them. We need to get rid of our lackluster Christianity in order to fulfill our individual callings, too. This book might be a brief 31-day journey, but M. R. Conrad has packed it with spiritual dynamite. Read it prayerfully. It might change your life—forever!”

—**Conrad Mbewe**, pastor of Kabwata Baptist Church and Founding Chancellor of the African Christian University in Lusaka, Zambia



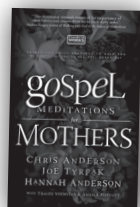
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Gospel Meditations for Fathers

"This collection of thirty-one meditations is a must-read for any man striving to fulfill his God-given role as a father. Since each reading is both biblical and practical, it equips the reader to lead family members to greater love to Christ and to God's Word. As parents to four and grandparents to fifteen, Patricia and I recommend this as a fresh resource."

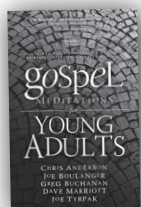
—John MacArthur



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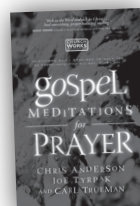
—Melissa Kruger



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"*Gospel Meditations for Young Adults* is a breath of fresh air for young Christians and for all of us who are raising, discipling, mentoring, or just concerned about them and their spiritual growth and wellbeing. The devotionals are biblical, pastoral, succinct, readable, relevant, and relatable. More importantly, the focus is cross-centered and theological without being forced or trite. This would be a great tool to use in parenting, personal discipleship, group study, or even pastoral counseling."

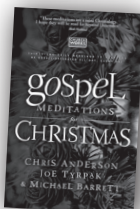
—Voddie Baucham



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"Brief and biblical, these meditations are full of sharp edges. They lead us to pray as cross-bearing disciples of Christ. Yet Anderson, Tyrbek, and Trueman comfort us with Christ's perfect grace for fallen people. So *Gospel Meditations for Prayer* is an encouraging book, but one designed to stretch you."

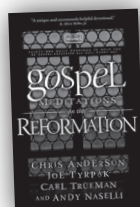
—Joel Beeke



Gospel Meditations for Christmas

"Too often Christmas speeds past us in a blur of busyness and stress, with only the briefest time and the shallowest thoughts given to the Christ that's meant to be at the heart of it all. Give yourself a Christmas to remember by using this profound devotional to pause, ponder, and praise our wonderful Savior."

—David Murray



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—R. Albert Mohler, Jr.



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About the Authors



CHRIS ANDERSON served as a pastor for twenty-five years, first in Ohio and then in Atlanta. He now works as Vice President of Global Opportunities for Biblical Ministries Worldwide. Chris is the author of three books, including a recent work on Christian music—*Theology That Sticks*. He has contributed to all the titles in Church Works Media's *Gospel Meditations* devotional series and is a hymn-writer of over fifty song lyrics, including "His Robes for Mine." Chris and his wife Lori have four beautiful and godly daughters.



ABBY HUFFSTUTLER has worked in copywriting since she was seventeen. After many years as a high school English teacher, she transitioned to freelance editing and brand content development. She serves alongside her husband Joel at their church outside Akron, Ohio. Abby and Joel have three daughters—Kate, Val, and Tess—who are all writers as well.



JOE TYRPAK has served as a pastor of Tri-County Bible Church in Madison, Ohio, since 2005. He has coauthored twelve other *Gospel Meditations* devotionals. He has written several modern psalms published by Church Works Media and has produced a DVD, *The Life of David Brainerd: A Documentary*, with a companion devotional. Beyond writing, Joe is the artistic editor for Church Works Media. He and his wife Hannah have four children.