



Psalm 27

Trusting and Waiting – Leaders version

For a one hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

What does the passage say and mean?

60 minutes

This psalm was written by David during 1 Samuel 23 – King Saul is looking for him with intent to kill. David's hiding in caves, running away from a mad man who hates him.

Read v1-3. Trust in God

*Before you start, read out v1 to the group slowly 7 times, and as you read, change the emphasis to the word in bold.

The **Lord** is my light and my salvation.

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The Lord is my light and my salvation.

*1. **STICKERS** Which word stood out most to you, and why?

2. What does it mean when we say that “the Lord is my light”?

We need light to see where we're going, to show us the way and to stop us stumbling. As our light, God gives us our direction, like a lighthouse does, he shows us the way to know him, lights up the darkness (sin, trouble etc), and shows us the way home (to salvation). In the Bible, the word 'light' often tells us about God's presence and favour (good will), as in this verse.

*3. Read v1. What is a stronghold? How is God our stronghold?

A safe place, a secure building, somewhere the enemy or thief can't access. With the Lord as the stronghold of my life, I know my life is safe on an eternal level (trusting God doesn't give us immunity from harm).

4. Why is David able to ask “of whom shall I be afraid?”

He's so confident in God's protection of him that he can ask this (rhetorical) question. The answer is, 'no-one' – he has no-one to fear because God is with him. 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' Rom 8:31.

*5. Look at v2. Does knowing that God is with you mean that everything will be easy and go well for Christians?

No. Attack will come. But God will not let us go. Think about some of the hard situations that people in the group are in at the moment, and consider the evidence that God is with them in those situations.

Questions 6-8 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

Read v4-6. Relationship with God

*6. **SDL** If David could only ask for one thing of God, it would be to be in his presence for ever. Why do you think David wants this?

David has understood the wonder and the joy of being in God's presence and he wants to gaze upon God's beauty for ever.

*7. **SDL** What does “dwelling in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” mean in v5?

David's talking about relationship with God – he's not just talking about being in heaven, but about living in God's presence every day of his life.

*8. **SDL** Are you able to say that you dwell in the house of the Lord? Why?

*9. In v5, what do the images of 'being kept safe in his dwelling', being hidden in the 'shelter of his tabernacle (tent)' and being 'high upon a rock' mean? (Remember David's situation – hiding from a pursuing army in the hills).

They are all pictures, taken from the situation that David finds himself in, to show us how God protects us, walks with us, never leaves us etc.

Read through the poem 'Footprints', below, with the group, and think about the picture of God carrying us when we are struggling. Again, remind the group that being a Christian doesn't protect us from trouble, but when we hit trouble, we know that God will bring us safely through it.

In the heat of it, we sometimes feel alone, and in those times we need to keep reminding ourselves that God is there. Sometimes we need a bit of distance from the event before we can look back and see that God was there.

Read v 7-12. Prayer for deliverance from his enemies

*10. Look at v7&9. David recognises his own unworthiness before God. Why are we unworthy to be before God?

Because we are all sinners and sin is infinitely offensive to God. Sin is saying to God that we want to live our own way, not God's way. It's living to please ourselves, not to honour God. The opposite of sin is summed up in Mark 12:31 (from Deut 6:4-5) – 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' No-one is able to fulfil this commandment, because we have sinful hearts and love ourselves more than we love God and so put ourselves first.

*11. In v8 we see that David knows what he should do and obeys – it's a conscious decision to seek God. Is that how you operate? Or do you expect yourself to automatically do the right thing?

Think about the need to consciously decide to obey God – it doesn't come naturally, because we all have sinful and rebellious hearts. Encourage the group look back on their own experiences of doing 'the wrong thing' and to think about what they would have done instead, had they decided to obey God in that situation. Watch out for people starting to beat themselves up about things they have done – try to keep the focus on the positive i.e. how to handle the same situation next time it arises.

12. How does God teach us his way and why does he want us to follow his way?

1. Through the Bible. Sometimes it is written in black and white – e.g. 'You shall not murder', Exodus 20:13. Sometimes it is a general principle which we need to apply to modern day living – e.g. looking after the environment, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground', Genesis 1:28.

2. Through our consciences, which are guided by the Bible. The Holy Spirit sensitises our consciences, as Christians. We become more aware of sin, and may even feel that we are more sinful now we trust Jesus than we were before. We probably aren't! But we feel that we are because our sensitivity to sin has been

increased, in order to drive us to God and away from sin. God isn't trying to spoil our fun. As our creator, he's showing us the right way to live, the way that will bring honour and glory to his name, and is best for us.

Read v13-14. Confidence in God

13. **SHOUT-OUT** In v13, David is confident that he will see God's goodness in this situation. He knows God will act, even though he also knows the enemy army is just around the corner (see 1 Samuel 23:26-28 to find out what happened next). In what ways have you seen God at work in your life in tough situations?

14. Sometimes we have to wait for God. He doesn't always answer prayer immediately – why do you think this is and what do you think we are supposed to learn from this?

- *God is not a slot machine. We would abuse Him if He answered everything straight away and according to our wishes. Consider the film 'Bruce Almighty' – Bruce was able to answer prayers for the whole world, and he ended up just saying 'yes' to everything. But there was chaos, because people don't really know what is best for them.*
- *Prayer expresses our trust in God.*
- *Waiting for God to answer our prayers helps develop your faith, perseverance, trust, obedience, patience etc.*
- *We may not be ready to hear / receive God's answer yet – God may have work to do in us before he answers our prayer.*
- *Remind the group that God does not always answer prayers with 'yes' – when we pray, we pray for what we want, what we think is best. But we need to surrender to God's will and knowledge, and recognise that he may say 'no' or 'not yet'.*

15. How do we wait for God?

It's not easy! We have to get on with life while we're waiting, and live in a way that honours God, even though we don't see the answer to our prayers yet. We may have to keep praying for something over a long period. We also have to live in the knowledge that God may answer our prayer differently than we had in mind, or say no / not yet.

How can I live according to these truths in my life?

20 minutes

*1. Read v2 again. As Christians, we know that whatever happens, God will not desert us.

What does it mean, practically, to trust God in tough situations?

Think about the importance of praying to God for help, trusting him that's he there, and recognising that we don't always understand God's ways or see the answers to prayer that we expected. Think about specific situations that group members are in, and consider God's promises in such situations, and what it looks like for them to live holding onto those promises. Encourage the group to pray about their tough situations, either now, or in private later.

2. Do you echo David's prayer to be in God's presence for ever? (v4) Why?

*3. Is there something that you need to make a conscious decision to obey God in this week? Are you going to make that decision?

Check out – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.



Footprints

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed He was walking along the beach with the LORD. Across the sky flashed scenes from His life. For each scene He noticed two sets of footprints in the sand. One belonging to Him and the other to the LORD.

When the last scene of His life flashed before Him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of His life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times of His life.

This really bothered Him and He questioned the LORD about it. LORD you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me.

The LORD replied, my precious, precious child, I Love you and I would never leave you! During your times of trial and suffering when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.



By Mary Stevenson



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'The Lord is my light and my salvation', (v1)

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3. Read v1. What is a stronghold? How is God our stronghold?

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5. Look at v2. Does knowing that God is with you mean that everything will be easy and go well for Christians?

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6. If David could only ask for one thing of God, it would be to be in his presence for ever. Why do you think David wants this?

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8. Are you able to say that you dwell in the house of the Lord? Why?

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