

An abstract painting featuring a variety of colors including yellow, blue, pink, red, and green. The style is expressive with visible brushstrokes. In the upper left, there are pink and blue flower-like shapes. In the lower right, there is a prominent blue shape with a yellow center, resembling a flower or a bird. The background is a mix of light and dark tones, creating a sense of depth and movement.

SONGS for the SOJOURN

A Guide to Help Children Engage the Psalms of Ascents

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The cover artwork, *Songs of Ascent*, is courtesy of Aaron Collier.

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SONGS FOR THE SOJOURN

When was the last time you took a trip to someplace fun?

What was the best part of the trip? The time between your house and the place you were going or actually arriving at that fun place?

If during the trip you said or thought, “Are we there yet?” or “How much longer until we get there?” it probably means being at that fun place was much better than traveling to the fun place.

An Ancient Journey

Many, many years ago, God’s people would travel from their homes to the city of Jerusalem to worship God. As they traveled, they would often sing songs with others, to help make their journey more enjoyable.

Some of those songs are recorded for us in the Bible. They are in the book we call The Psalms. Those songs, clustered together in Psalms 120-134, are often called the Songs or Psalms of Ascents.

Your Journey

Though you might not travel to Jerusalem to worship God, The Psalms of Ascents are also songs you can sing throughout your life. In fact, God’s people continue to sing these Psalms or songs throughout their day—whether they are happy or sad, excited or disappointed—no matter what they are feeling.

God’s people often think of their lives as a long journey that will end when they see Jesus. Singing these songs helps remind God’s people they are on a journey

Singing on Your Journey

When they are happy, these songs remind them God loves them and they will even be happier when they are with Jesus. When they are sad, these songs remind them God loves them and when they see Jesus, they won’t be sad anymore. When they are excited, these songs remind them God loves them and when they see Jesus, they will be even more excited. When they are disappointed, these songs remind them God loves them and when they see Jesus, they won’t ever be disappointed again.

When they sing these songs, God’s people are reminded that Jesus also sang these songs when he lived on the earth. And one day, they will get to sing these songs with Jesus.

Singing these songs help you remember how wonderful it will be when you get to the most special place of all—heaven—and see Jesus. And singing these songs helps you remember that during the time before you see Jesus—though you may cry out “Am I there yet?” or “How much longer?”—you can find joy in the journey now.

Using this Book

Work through this book together with your mom or dad. Try to get through one Psalm a week. Read the Psalm out loud. Think about what the Psalm means as you read the explanation that follows. Answer the questions by drawing or writing your answers on the blank paper. Pray with your mom or dad after you are done.

PSALM 120

Deliver Me, O LORD

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

¹In my distress I called to the LORD,
and he answered me.

²Deliver me, O LORD,
from lying lips,
from a deceitful tongue.

³What shall be given to you,
and what more shall be done to you,
you deceitful tongue?

⁴A warrior's sharp arrows,
with glowing coals of the broom tree!

⁵Woe to me, that I sojourn in Meshech,
that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!

⁶Too long have I had my dwelling
among those who hate peace.

⁷I am for peace,
but when I speak, they are for war!

PSALM 120

When you are hungry, do you ever ask your mom or dad for food? Of course you do. You know that if it is right for you to have food and they have the food, they will give you what you need. That's what moms and dads do. They give good things to their children.

In Psalm 120, God's people are asking him for help because they are in trouble. And they know they can ask God for help when they are in trouble because he has helped them in the past and promised to help them in the future.

We can also ask God for help when we are in trouble. In fact, God wants us to ask him for help! We know that he will hear us because the Bible tells us stories of him listening to his people. Jesus said that God is like a good father who gives good things to his children when they ask for them.

Thinking About the Psalm

Draw a picture of you asking your parents for something. Now draw a second picture of you receiving what you asked your parents to give you.

Praying the Psalm

God, thank you that you hear the prayers of your children. Thank you for hearing my prayers. I ask that you would help me _____
(fill in blank with your request). Amen.

PSALM 121

My Help Comes From the LORD

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

² My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade on your right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

⁷ The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

⁸ The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.

PSALM 121

When you take a trip, what are some things you rely on to get you there safely?

A car? Safe roads? Maps? Good drivers or pilots?

In Psalm 121, the writer is about to venture out on a long trip. It's a dangerous journey. There are many things that can hurt him along the way.

But he has help. He has God. And he knows that God can and will help him.

Thinking About the Psalm

As you read through the Psalm or listen to it, write or draw some of the ways the Psalmist says God will help him on his journey. Then, talk with your mom or dad about how God might help you in some of those same ways.

Praying the Psalm

Almighty God, creator of all things, thank you for caring for me. I praise you because you help me in the following ways: (list the ways that God helps you). Amen.

PSALM 122

Let Us Go to the House of the LORD

A SONG OF ASCENTS. OF DAVID.

¹ I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD!”

² Our feet have been standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem!

³ Jerusalem— built as a city
that is bound firmly together,

⁴ to which the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD,

as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

⁵ There thrones for judgment were set,
the thrones of the house of David.

⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
“May they be secure who love you!

⁷ Peace be within your walls
and security within your towers!”

⁸ For my brothers and companions’ sake,
I will say, “Peace be within you!”

⁹ For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek your good.

PSALM 122

Pretend today is your birthday and your mom or dad said that they would take you anyplace you want to go.

Where would you want to go? Why did you pick that place? What about that place makes you happy?

Psalm 122 is full of gladness. The writer, King David, is glad to be in Jerusalem to worship God. David writes about all the wonderful things he sees in Jerusalem and all the wonderful things he hopes for Jerusalem.

We don't travel to Jerusalem anymore, but still "go to the house of the Lord" when we go to church each Sunday to worship God.

Thinking About the Psalm

After reading or listening to the Psalm, draw a picture of King David standing in Jerusalem. Talk with your mom or dad about the things you think David feels when he is in Jerusalem. Tell them the reasons you think he feels those things.

Now, draw a picture of yourself in church. Are you happy to be there? If so, what are some of the reasons? What are some things that could make you happier to be at church?

Praying the Psalm

Lord Jesus, help me be joyful at church. Church is a place to worship you, be with others, and be with you. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your church. Amen.

PSALM 123

Our Eyes Look to the LORD Our God

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

¹To you I lift up my eyes,
O you who are enthroned in the heavens!

²Behold, as the eyes of servants
look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a maidservant
to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the LORD our God,
till he has mercy upon us.

³Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us,
for we have had more than enough of contempt.

⁴Our soul has had more than enough
of the scorn of those who are at ease,
of the contempt of the proud.

PSALM 123

Think back to a time when someone was mean to you. Did you tell anyone about it? If you did, why did you choose to tell that person?

Psalm 123 describes a time when people who didn't love God were mean to God's people. The Psalm is their prayer to God, telling him about what happened, asking him for help, and waiting until he provides that help.

Thinking About the Psalm

Read or listen to the Psalm. What does it mean that God is "enthroned in the heavens"? Why do you think that is important when you ask him for help?

Praying the Psalm

Write out or speak a prayer to God, asking him to help you with something sad.



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