



BETWEEN 6:00 AM—9:00 AM: FIRST HEAT AND CACTI, THEN PALMS, SHADE AND A TRICKLING BROOK

Seven hikes in seven days. That’s what we did on our recent trip. The highlight was Anza Borrego Desert State Park in the Colorado Desert. It’s the largest state park in California, and a harsh, exhilarating wonderland. We hiked to Maidenhair Falls via the Hellhole Canyon Trail. It’s only six miles there and back but the park authorities warn you to bring water. My twin brother Dan is always beating the hydration drum, which is why he’s wearing that smug grin. Here he is in front of a mock grave with a chilling sign that



says: “They didn’t bring enough water.” (Dan: “See, I told ya’, you gotta drink”).

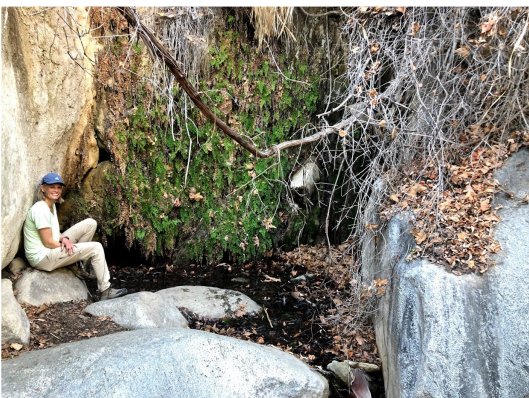


After two miles of the sun beating down on our heads, we were surprised by occasional shade as we climbed deeper and higher into the canyon. Finally, we got to the end of the trail, an oasis of palm trees with a small waterfall, right in the middle of the searing desert. The enclosure was green, cool and the water made a musical sound as it cascaded down from above.

Becky said that the whole experience pictured for her the last twelve months, a journey of dryness with Covid and the other traumas, but with springs of refreshment for the people of God. We thought of Psalm 84, which is the song of a pilgrim who is making his way to the temple in Jerusalem for worship and feasting. As he walks in God’s power through a barren, desert landscape, the thought of God’s presence transforms his outlook. Just the anticipation of arriving at God’s “dwelling place” turns his present surroundings into a garden with springs and pools.

Psa. 84:5 *Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.*

Psa. 84:6 *As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.*



Psa. 84:7 *They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.*



Here’s a happy thought: we don’t need to situate ourselves in a temple of timber, stone and gold, because our God resides inside us by his Holy Spirit. We don’t just have strength, we have the Strength Giver. Let’s “sing for joy to the living God” (Ps. 84:2). We recommend the song “Sing for Joy” by Don Moen. You can find it by Googling “Sing for Joy Don Moen.” We’ll print the lyrics on the next page.

Lyrics for “Sing for Joy” by Don Moen

If we call to Him, He will answer us
If we run to Him, He will run to us
If we lift our hands, He will lift us up
Come now praise His name, all you saints of God

Oh, sing for joy to God our strength
Oh, sing for joy to God our strength, our strength

Draw near to Him, He is here with us
Give Him your love, He's in love with us
He will heal our hearts, He will cleanse our hands
If we rend our hearts He will heal our land (Yes He will)

Oh, sing for joy to God our strength
Oh, sing for joy to God our strength, our strength

If we call to Him, He will answer us
If we run to Him, He will run to us
If we lift our hands, He will lift us up
Come now praise his name, all you saints of God

Draw near to Him, He is here with us
Give Him your love, He's in love with us
He will heal our hearts, He will cleanse our hands
If we rend our hearts He will heal our land (Yes He will)

Oh, sing (sing) for joy to God our strength
Oh, sing (sing) for joy to God our strength
Oh, sing (sing) for joy to God our strength



Oh, sing (sing) for joy to God our strength (Come on sing for joy)

Oh, sing (sing) for joy to God our strength
Oh, sing (sing) for joy to God our strength
(Come on) Sing (sing) for joy to God our strength
Oh, sing (sing) for joy to God our strength, our strength

BETWEEN 9:00 AM—12:00 PM: **MORE ENVIABLE THAN THE TEMPLE BIRDS WHO NEST IN THE CREVICES AND BEAMS.**



Psalm 84:3-4 says:

Psa. 84:3 *Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.*

Psa. 84:4 *Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!*
Selah

The Psalmist tells the the Lord that the birds are fortunate to make their nests in the nooks and crannies of the temple. They want to be close to their Maker and the Psalmist is a little jealous. He's in the desert after all, marching up and down hills, yearning for God's closeness. Again, as New Covenant members,

we're more privileged than the birds (and the Psalmist) for we have God within. Enjoy his intimate companionship during these three hours. Set your timer and talk or sing to him every thirty minutes. If you're with others, sing under your breath!

BETWEEN 12:00 PM—3:00 PM: **CHIRPING OUT OUR REQUESTS**

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

Psa. 84:9 *Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!*

The prospects of the ancient people of Israel were always tied to the character of their king. Here the Psalmist calls the king “our shield” and “your anointed.” This was dubious reality for the children of Israel, because so often the Israelite kings were evil and unreliable. But if our fate is tied to our King, we're in fine shape. Praise God for our King Jesus, God's Anointed, the Messiah. He started a grand redemption project that will include us and even the whole cosmos (“*and through him to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross*” —Col. 1:20).

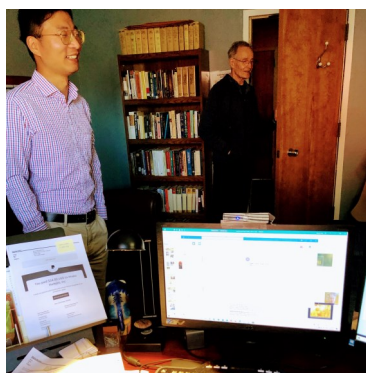
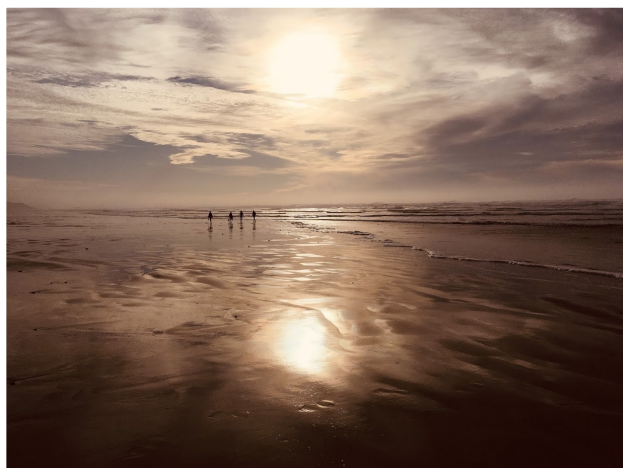
BETWEEN 3:00 PM—4:00 PM: Join the **AFTERNOON Joel Moment Prayer Gathering**. Go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.us) and enter Meeting ID and Password.

BETWEEN 5:00 PM—7:00 PM: ALL THE WAYS HE PROVIDES AND ALL THE WAYS HE PROTECTS

Psa. 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Psa. 84:12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!

Look at these walkers between the sun and its reflection. Psalm 84 is the one place in the Bible where God is likened to the sun. Why? It's poetry, so what do you think? Here's my hunch: the sun provides energy for green plants which in turn gives oxygen for life on earth. It also provides heat and light among other benefits. So, the sun pictures all the ways that God meets the needs of his people.



Pastor Glen Miller ("The Coach") just popped in and said this about Psalm 88:11: *"That's one of my life verses. I know that God will not withhold anything that is good for our growth and development, even hard things. I myself wouldn't withhold wind sprints from my basketball players because that wouldn't help them in the last five minutes of the game. For me to withhold something of value would not make me a good coach."*

Give our Heavenly Coach praise for all his gifts, the happy things that make us rejoice and the hard things that make us resilient.

BETWEEN 7:00 PM—8:00 PM: Join the **EVENING Joel Moment Prayer Gathering**. Go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.us) and enter Meeting ID and Password.

BETWEEN 8:00 PM—10:00 PM: CLOSE READING YIELDS TWO SURPRISES.

Here's a little Bible detective work. There is one word and one phrase that each show up three times in Psalm 84. Go back through the Psalm and discover what they are. When a Psalm repeats words and themes, there's an important reason. I'll give you hints as you do this treasure hunt for these two triads.

Hint #1 is to the right:



What is the *single word* that is repeated three times and what role does it play in the Psalm?

Hint #2 is to the right:



What *phrase* is repeated three times and why is it significant in the Psalm?

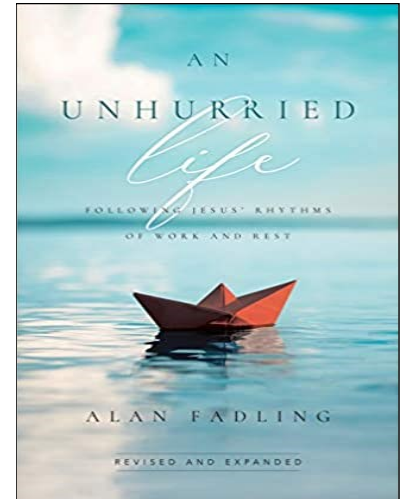


3:00 PM and 7:00 PM Prayer Gatherings



ALAN FADLING *[I met Alan in 2008 when I attended a series of spiritual formation and leadership retreats in Southern California. I came to love Alan right away and learned much about how to live and serve at a healthy pace and with the practices of Jesus.]*

Psa. 62:1 *For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.*



GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #1 (5 min.): Alan Fadling quoted a verse about waiting in silence. Have you had silence at all today? Be in your group, but be quiet for five minutes. Let things float to the surface that have been kept down.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #2 (5 min.): In V.2, the Psalmist says that he “sing[s]” for joy to the living God. This is fine, but the word more precisely means to “give a ringing cry or strong callout.” Let’s do that for the first five minutes. Call out God’s virtues and excellent qualities so that our Lord and your group mates can hear you.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #3 (5 min.): Gal. 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

I like **Susan Somes’** Prayer Prompt: *[“Let’s] pray for the Holy Spirit to work through us to bring peace, love and joy to those around us — his own fruits in our lives — as we relate to people as persons, created in the image of God.”* Go!

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #4 (5 min.): Psalm 84:11 *No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.*

Let’s pray for holy, upright lives that are free of evil. **Frank Nemec** reminded me that we need to think corporately about this verse. So, let’s ask that our “Jesus Nation” in the U.S. would be pure, united and committed to worship and mission in equal measure.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #5 (5 min.): Pick a theme from the list below and pray however the Holy Spirit leads you: love, hope, Easter, death, lost people, new creation, food, marriage, Palm Sunday, drugs, Bible, music, pandemics, the media, angels, demons and the 68 million members of Generation Z, those between 6 and 24 years old.