

A Man for all Seasons

The 1996 movie, *A Man for all Seasons*, chronicles the life of **Sir Thomas More** (1478-1535). The son of an accomplished lawyer, he attended Oxford but left under pressure from his father to take up legal studies in London. His legal and political accomplishments were considerable. In 1518 he was appointed royal counselor to King Henry VIII, earning high honors and eventually knighthood. Respected widely, More's life came to an end when he opposed the King's divorce and later opposed the King's decision to become the head of the Church. This led to imprisonment, trial, and execution. He went to his death with tremendous composure, even joking with his executioner. The secret behind this "man for all seasons" was his devotion to Christ. More devoted one day a week for meditation and prayer.

Another "man for all seasons" is **David**, also known for being a man after God's own heart. Something about David's approach to God highlights his humanity even as his prayers overwhelm us with a sense of God's character. This week, we look at five of his prayers. Though prayers for sure, these psalms are also songs – they welcome the congregation as part of the audience, even as they are sung to the Lord. Further, David seems acutely aware of the making of the song. Here I speak not of musical notes or instrumentation, but of his emotional state, his immediate circumstances, his memories, and his hopes. May God bless us with these prayers, from this "man of all seasons."

Monday – Praise

1. Please read Psalm 65. On a rational level, this psalm makes little sense: what could we possibly add to our conversation with God by telling him about his wonderful character? However, if we keep in mind that these psalms are also songs, and that they cultivate our emotional life with God, we may begin to understand what it means to be a person after God's own heart. What are David's thoughts and emotions for God?
2. What does David love about God? What do you love about God? Tell him all the details.

Prayer Focus – Today, do what you need to do to be reminded of God's grandeur: Go outside to be reminded of what he has made; think back upon his workings in your life; consider his faithfulness to grow his church world-wide. Then, take time to praise him thoroughly and mightily. He is exceedingly worthy.

Tuesday – Thirst

"Give me thy grace, good Lord, to set the world at naught, to set my mind fast upon thee. And not to hang upon the blast of men's mouths. To be content to be solitary, not to long for worldly company, little and little... to cast off the world, and rid my mind of all business thereof.... Gladly to be thinking of God.... To lean unto the comfort of God, busily to labour to love him." Thomas More

1. Please read Psalm 63. David finds himself facing a dry time in his life. What does David do in his prayer about his unfulfilled heart?
2. Why does David seem to find himself in the desolation of the desert (see verse 9)? In what sense is your life dry or barren?
3. During the dry times, what use does David make of his memories of God?

Prayer Focus – Pray for our FBC congregation, and that God would purify our hearts toward him. Ask God to give us hearts that are only and always for him. May we long for Christ with the thirst that drove David to pray this prayer of desire.

Wednesday – Confession

"David's sin, enormous as it was, was wildly outdone by God's grace. David's sin cannot, must not, be minimized, but it's minuscule compared to God's salvation from it. It's always a mistake to concentrate attention on our sins; it's God's work on our sins that's the main event." Eugene Peterson – Leap Over a Wall

1. Please read Psalm 51. What does David own about himself in this prayer of confession?
2. What does God want? What does David want?
3. What do you need to confess?

Prayer Focus – As a people and a culture we have chosen many idols to bow down and worship. From sex to materialism, from trust in ourselves, to our passion for ease and comfort, we have much to repent. Ask the Lord that he might forgive us of our idolatry and draw us back to a pure love for him.

Thursday – Intercession

1. Please read Psalm 67. Here, David's vision extends beyond himself and his relationship with God to embrace others. What is David asking God for?
2. This prayer of David's seems to intertwine blessing, praise, and reverence for God (verse 7). How are these three related to one another?

Prayer Focus – Who is on your heart today? Lift them before God. Ask that God might bless them and lead them to a life of blessing, praise and reverence.

Friday – Stillness

"In the secret, in the quiet place, in the stillness you are there..." Worship Song

1. Please read Psalm 37:1-11. Though not a prayer per se, this psalm contains much wisdom for how we are to approach God in prayer. What wisdom does David share with us?
2. We cannot rightly pray to God if all we do is babble at Him. He is the God who hears and who answers. How does verse 7 encourage us this way?

Prayer Focus – Find a place today where you can be still before the Lord. Read again today's passage from Psalm 37. Take time to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you through his Word. In what ways is he leading you to cease striving and know that he is God?

For the Weekend: David's End-of-Life Psalm

Please read I Chronicles 29:10-20. After a life of praying and singing to God David, in this song, achieves a measure of closure. On which characteristics of God does David meditate? What does David ask of God?