

## Are You Thirsty For God?

### Psalm 42:1-11

Have you ever been really thirsty?

It was in High school that I first heard the term “Hey, save some for the fish.” I happened to be at the drinking fountain taking a long drink of water after an especially hard basketball practice. I was thirsty and I wanted to quench my thirst.

So, I ask again, what makes you thirsty? Along with that what really satisfies your thirst?

The Bible talks about another kind of thirst. It’s found in **Psalm 42** where I invite you to join me in your Bibles.

Let’s set the stage for our passage with an intro. The heading is vague: **“For the director of music. A maskil of the Sons of Korah.”**

Here is a song given to the music director to lead either the choir or the congregation in a song. You might be wondering what a maskil is. So are many others, even scholars. The best they can come up with is that it’s a musical term which doesn’t help us much, so we’ll just leave it at that.

You may then wonder who the Sons of Korah are. Levi, one of the sons of Jacob, had three sons – Gershon, Merari, and Kohath. When the Tabernacle was built in the wilderness their descendants were given responsibility for its care and transport. They were under the direct supervision of Eleazer the son of Aaron. Unlike the Gershonites and Merarites who got to transport everything on carts, the Kohathites had to carry everything. The priests had to wrap all the equipment from the tabernacle because they were not to be physically touched by anyone else. Only after they were wrapped could the Kohathites pick them up to transport.

Some of the Kohathites became jealous of the priests and didn’t like their role of just carrying the items. Korah was a grandson of Kohath who joined a group of men from the tribe of Reuben who challenged Moses and Aaron and their right to the priesthood. Two hundred and fifty men were part of this rebellion. God wasn’t too happy and poured out his

wrath. He caused the earth to open up and swallow the malcontents and their possessions, even family members. Korah’s sons were too small to understand the rebellion and were spared from God’s wrath.

Fast forward a couple centuries and we find that before he became king, some of the sons of Korah joined David on his military exploits. When he became king and brought the Tabernacle to Jerusalem, he assigned the Sons of Korah as musicians. There is a lesson in God’s mercy and grace withholding His wrath on some and in grace using them in worship.

So while we know who it is to, the Sons of Korah, we don’t know who this Psalm is from. Some think it was David in exile either from Saul or from Absalom when we read that the author was away in the northern part of Judah and away from the great assemblies gathered at the Tabernacle for worship. Others think it might have been Hezekiah. Still others think it was one of the Sons of Korah reflecting back on their ignoble beginning being grateful for God’s Almighty hand allowing them to hold the honor of being able to bring praise to Him or thinking about God as their refuge or to think about how wonderful it is to be in His presence at times of worship.

Whoever wrote this Psalm, we are confronted with the means by which we can have peace in the middle of being downcast by any number of external or internal forces that would otherwise rob us of peace. It is to thirst for God who is our hope.

Notice that the psalmist had a deep desire.

### I. THE PSALMIST HAD A DEEP DESIRE – vv. 1-2, 4

**What is it you desire most?** Some say you can tell what your desires are by taking a peek into your checkbook. Others will say you can tell what you desire most by looking at how you spend your time. There’s a lot of truth to both. Where you spend your money and your time reveals a great deal about your priorities and what you value.

[If you were to go to the gym and watch my workout and compare it to my friend Candace, you would notice a vast difference. While I try to put in a good](#)

workout, I could work harder. While I try to eat pretty well, I still like my snacks and a second helping from time to time. Candy on the other hand, works out hard. She rotates her workout schedule between cardio and weights. She tracks her calories and avoids certain foods. While I'm trying to stay someone fit, she is doing it to prepare for some upcoming competition. We have different desires.

**When it comes to spiritual fitness, what is our deep desire?** For the psalmist, we notice first that he longed to know God.

### A. The Psalmist Longed to Know God – v. 1

I can only speak for myself, but maybe you've had the same experience. I will crave something but I'm not sure what it is. I will go into the kitchen and start sampling things to figure out what I have a hankering for. I'll try a few chips and then some crackers. I might have a piece of bread and butter with some jelly. I'll try a few marshmallows or a small handful of chocolate chips. Maybe it's peanuts or a handful of cereal. If I don't find anything in the cupboard I'll go to the frig and try Gatorade, milk, and orange juice trying to find that one thing I'm craving but not sure what it is.

People a lot smarter than I am talk about a God void or a God shaped hole that is within each person. We were created by God to know Him, to glorify Him, and to enjoy Him forever and only God can fill that purpose. But sin messed that all up causing us to either ignore it or fill it up with other things besides God even things like religion in search for filling that God shaped hole. **Jeremiah 17:9** explains why we search in all the wrong places to satisfy our desire for God – it's because our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. In other words, our heart tries to convince us that either there is no God or that other things can be God. **Romans 1:18-22** says that humanity has even ignored what it can know about God, which leads man to worship everything else but God.

Man tries to fill the God void with spiritual junk food. They can even be good things like work, family, status, wealth, hobbies, sports, and leisure.

In the end they wonder why nothing ever truly satisfied that deep longing. Just as you can't fit a square peg in a round hole, nothing but God can fill that God-shaped hole.

Using an analogy from nature, the psalmist says that his deep desire was to know God. It's possible that the imagery being used was something he had recently seen. Droughts happened from time to time where lack of rain caused rivers to dry up. Perhaps while he was out on a walk, he came across a small riverbed not yet consumed by the lack of rain and there at its edge was a deer taking advantage of the limited resource by bending low and drinking freely and longingly as if it didn't know where its next drink of water would come from.

Camels are known for their ability to go long stretches without water because they can store it in their hump. In a parody on our children's propensity to ask for a glass of water right after they go to bed, a little camel has just asked for some water to which the mother camel asked why they needed some when they just had a drink a month earlier.

Most of us aren't like that. We need water on a regular basis every day. It's essential to life. Dehydration can lead to heat injury, urinary and kidney problems, seizures and low blood volume shock. It can cause diarrhea, vomiting and other illnesses. We need water and when we have it readily available, we can take it for granted, but when we don't have it we begin the desperate search for water.

Specialists in the art of survival say that the number one priority when you are stranded somewhere is to find clean and fresh water. Science has shown that a human body can survive two weeks without food, but only 3-4 days without water.

In some desperate situation the psalmist has a deep desire to know God. As a thirsty deer longed for fresh water, so he longed for God.

**What kind of desire do we have for God? Do we go days without Him? Do other things take away our desire for Him? Do we have the same longing to**

be with Him as two people deeply in love who are separated counting the days and hours before they are together again?

In his book Knowing God, J.I. Packer writes: “What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the ‘eternal life’ that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. ‘This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent (John 17:3). What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight and contentment than anything else? Knowing God. ‘This is what the Lord says: ‘Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about his: that he understands and knows Me’ (Jeremiah 9:23-24).”

Is the deep desire of our heart to know God and to know Him more each day? Complacency in our desire to know God more can rob us of the joy we experience by longing for Him and being filled with Him.

A.W. Tozer writing in The Pursuit of God states that “distractions may hinder, but once the heart is committed to Him, after each brief excursion away from Him, the attention will return again and rest upon Him like a wandering bird coming back to its window.”

Tozer says we may try to quench our thirst with other things, but will find in the end that we come back to the One our soul truly longs for. The psalmist longed to know God. He then mentions a second deep desire. It was a longing to meet with God.

## B. The Psalmist Longed to Meet With God – v. 2

Whatever the occasion for the writing of this psalm, it is apparent that he had been away from the place of worship. Looking at **verse 6**, the psalmist is not in Jerusalem, but away from the tabernacle and the place of worship, away from the crowd of worshippers that joined him in meeting with God. He longed for that place to meet with God in worship. He pined for time with the living God. Now, I think that he knew, as we do, that we can meet with God

anytime and anywhere, that a designated spot isn’t the only place to encounter God. We know from **Psalm 139** that God is omnipresent as David asks the rhetorical questions of where he could go to get away from God. The answer is that there isn’t anywhere we can go that God isn’t already there. We don’t need to be reminded that God is always with us and will never leave or forsake us or that He is an ever-present help in time of trouble.

Yet it is my impression that the psalmist longed to meet with God at the same time and in the same place with other worshippers. There is something about the collective presence of other believers united in their desire to meet with God as we gather and worship God together in the same place. There is a vibrancy in worship when we are with others in whose presence we are encouraged being spurred on to love and good works (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). In gathering with others we are obeying the command to meet in worship.

Make every effort to be in church. We grow spiritually when we gather together. Don’t let convenience keep you from coming to meet with God and with others.

It greatly pained my dad when he couldn’t go to church. He had devotions in the morning and the evening, but his desire was to meet God in an assembly of believers. The psalmist longed to meet with God.

Here I am, desperate for You to meet me here.  
Here I stand, reaching out for You to meet me here.  
Come and breathe Your peace in me, as I fall down on my knees.  
Lord I know that as I wait, You will draw near.  
O Lord, meet me here.

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Do you long as the psalmist did to meet with God?  
It was his deep desire.

The psalmist had one more deep desire. He longed to remember God.

## C. The Psalmist Longed to Remember God – v. 4

We’ll get to his distress in a moment, but here in **verse 4**, we see that instead of wallowing in self-pity

regarding his plight, he chose to remember the past and the different times God had helped him. As he was crying out to God, he remembered the times he was with the crowd of people going to worship God.

Maybe it was David remembering when he led the procession bringing the ark into Jerusalem. It was certainly a festive time of worship.

Maybe it was the choir director himself leading the people on their way to worship the Lord.

Whatever the case, this psalmist is remembering the times he led the people as they marched to the house of God to worship Him.

A number of psalms were sung as people from all over Israel made their way to Jerusalem for their annual celebrations like the Day of Atonement. They would sing these psalms with joyful hearts. It wasn't to pass the time. It wasn't for entertainment. It was to celebrate God in worship for all He had done for them.

This deep desire for the psalmist to know God, to meet with God, and to remember God, was a daily longing, something that could only be satisfied by God Himself.

Alexander MacLaren concludes with words worth noting: "Every man has an unconscious and unsatisfied longing after God. There is a spiritual unrest. No man is made to be satisfied from himself. For the stilling of our own hearts, for the satisfying of our own nature, for the strengthening and joy of our own being, we need to go beyond ourselves, and to fix upon something external to ourselves." We must long for God.

David expressed it this way in **Psalm 63:8** "My soul clings to You."

KJV "My soul follows hard after You."

Does our soul pant hard after God or are we content with a few nibbles here and there? In those times of desperation does our soul cling hard to God?

The psalmist was thirsty for God because he had found himself with a distraught disposition.

## II. THE PSALMIST HAD A DISTRAUGHT DISPOSITION – vv. 3, 7, 9-10

In the past I have made the statement that I still believe is true today. Faith is never static, meaning that faith never stays the same. Our faith is either growing stronger or it is diminishing. I think the same can be said about our desire for God and the main reason is how we handle difficulties, how we handle life when everything seems to be against us. **Will those things cause me to draw closer to God or will I let them cause my faith and love for God waiver, falter, or even be discarded?**

**James 1:2-4** reminds us that it is in our trials that we grow. They produce in us a maturity that comes when in the trial we have sought to know God and experience His presence and power.

The psalmist was in his own spiritual drought thirsting for God in a very difficult time when for some reason he was away from those who could encourage him in his faith, away from the very place he found strength in his spiritual walk through the presence of God. If you are in such a place of spiritual drought, some spiritual desert, thirst for God and He will satisfy.

Let's note three reasons the psalmist felt distraught.

### A. The Psalmist Felt Distraught By the Mockery of Others – v. 3

I'm not alone in saying that it's no fun being laughed at. Mockery is insulting and scornful speech or behavior directed at a particular person. It's when others say derogatory things about you, or they may mock you by mimicking something you did. I'm sure I've done it to others, and I know it's been done to me.

Someone rightly said that "mockery comes from a heart that has hardened itself against others, for the heart that loves as God loves cannot mock another."

Jesus was mocked by the Pharisees, the crowd and the soldiers as He was being crucified. (**Matthew 27:39-41**)

Elisha was mocked by kids calling him old baldy and we know what happened to them. (**II Ki. 2:23**)

Paul was mocked by some in Athens as he spoke

about the resurrection of Christ. (**Acts 17:32**)

Peter must have known the sting of being mocked as he penned words to prepare us for what lies ahead for the believer **“Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” (II Peter 3:3-4)**

The psalmist may have been among his own people, or he may have been among Gentiles when he called out to God for deliverance from those who mocked him for God’s apparent absence. **Verse 3** also states that this mocking was happening all the time.

But it wasn’t just the mocking tongue that had him distraught, there was also the mounting trouble.

### **B. The Psalmist Felt Distraught By the Mounting Trouble – v. 7**

In **verse 1** we get the impression that there is a drought while in **verse 7** we see that troubles were like a waterfall where the water relentlessly poured over the edge or like the raging waters during a storm where one wave after another beat hard against the shore. And that’s how the psalmist was feeling about whatever it was that was buffeting against him. There seemed to be no end to the mocking and troubles which pounded him.

Keep in mind that often times these trials are allowed by God for our good and His glory. As I reminded you earlier, trials will either move us toward God or away from Him, they will either strengthen our faith or cause our faith to diminish. **Which is the case for you?**

The psalmist gives one more reason he was distraught and it’s found in **verses 9-10**.

### **C. The Psalmist Felt Distraught By Mourning God’s Absence – vv. 9-10**

Sometimes we can begin to believe the lie that others are saying. His enemies taunted him by asking where

his God was. The psalmist then wondered himself by questioning why God had seemingly forgotten him. Didn’t He hear what was being said about him? Didn’t He see what was happening to him? Wasn’t He going to deliver him?

It’s like the line of lying by Satan to Eve that God didn’t care about her, holding out on her. Don’t you believe that for a minute. It’s a lie. **I Peter 5:7** tells us that God cares for us.

In **Matthew 11:28-30** Jesus invites us to bring our burdens to Him.

I hope you aren’t tired of me saying that God’s silence doesn’t not mean His absence. God is always working even though we can’t see Him or see what He is doing.

I don’t know who said this, but they are words to encourage us when trials seem to keep on coming **“We hit upon the meaning of deep calls to deep when we recognize that human needs are great, but the riches of God are greater.”** That’s our hope. That’s our trust. That’s our confidence.

**What deep things are you going through that seem like waves crashing over you?** Resist the thought that God isn’t there and note that the psalmist gives us a solid reason to trust God. We see it in his devoted determination.

### **III. THE PSALMIST HAD A DEVOTED DETERMINATION – vv. 5-6, 8, 11**

Notice two things that helped him in his time of distress when his soul was downcast from all the things he was experiencing.

First, the psalmist reacted with prayer and praise.

#### **A. The Psalmist Reacted With Prayer and Praise – vv. 5, 8, 11**

It’s the same advice Paul gave in **Philippians 4:6** **“Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”**

It was Charles Spurgeon who rightly said that

prayer and praise are yoked together.

**When distraught by what others are saying about you or by the trouble you find yourself in, are you confidently praying to the One who said He would never leave you or forsake you? Is your prayer filtered through praise for the One who always keeps His Word?** The psalmist says in **verse 8** that God's love is directed to him and it comes with a song concerning him that the psalmist then turns into a prayer.

There wasn't much Elihu said to Job that is comforting, but one thing is true, the Lord gives a song in the night. (**Job 35:10**)

You may be in the middle of some night that seems to engulf you in perpetual darkness, the waves of despair are beating down on you but remember that the Lord gives you a song in the night and that there is joy that comes in the morning.

**Psalm 30:4-5 "Sing to the Lord, you saints of His; praise His holy name. For His anger lasts only a moment, but His favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."**

The psalmist was confident in the Lord, trusting that God was with him. His prayer of confidence led to praise. In these verses, the psalmist uses the term Jehovah as a reminder that He is the covenant keeping God and won't go back on His promises. The psalmist reacted to his situation with prayer and praise. We should do the same.

He gives one final reason for his devoted determination, it's back in **verse 6**.

## **B. The Psalmist Remembered God – v. 6**

Of the many races I ran, one ranks at the top. It's not because I won the race – I didn't. It's not because I broke a record – I hadn't. It's the reason I ran it. It was a race raising money and awareness for Alzheimer's. My grandfather was in a nursing home not able to remember much about who he was or about any of his past. I had a sign made that I wore on my back. It read "Running for Grandpa – remembering him because he can't remember."

I need to remember what God has done for me, because it is in remembering those things that I remember God and His goodness to me. How important it is to count our blessings to see what God has done. God never forgets us. Let's remember not to forget God. That gives us confident hope in our prayers and celebratory praise in our worship. When God seems distant draw on past experiences.

As I think about this psalm and especially the opening words, we have a choice. We need to make a deliberate decision.

## **IV. A DELIBERATE DECISION**

Ask yourself what is keeping you from thirsting after God.

It could be some **sin** we are hiding or harboring. Unconfessed sin will keep us from thirsting after God. It dulls our desire for Him.

Maybe it's **complacency**. Being content with our walk with God will dull our desire for Him. As I said earlier, love for God never stays the same. It will either grow or diminish.

Maybe it's **things**. Work. Hobbies. Leisure. They aren't necessarily bad, but we can let them cool our love for the Lord. Jesus warned the Ephesian church that they had forsaken their first love and challenged them to repent and return. (**Revelation 2:4**)

We need to deliberately decide to thirst for God.

**Desire to know God.**

**Jeremiah 9:23-24 "This is what the Lord says: 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me...'"**

**Desire to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5)**

**Desire to seek God's kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33).**

**Desire to submit to God and draw near to Him (James 4:7-8).**

We can try a lot of things that may satisfy us for a short time but only One truly quenches our thirst. He is waiting for us to come and drink deeply of Him and be truly satisfied.

**How thirsty are you for God?**