

# Real Prayers for Real Life

A Prayer for Answers

Psalm 13

July 20, 2025

## Pastoral Prayer

*Our Father in heaven, You are holy—set apart, sovereign, and good in all Your ways. You are not a distant deity. You are a present Father. You know our thoughts before we speak them, and You welcome our cries even when they don't come out right.*

*This morning, we say again: Hallowed be Your name. Let Your name be revered in our homes and our hearts. Let Your name be trusted when the world around us feels uncertain, and when the silence stretches longer than we expected.*

*Your kingdom come, Lord. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And how we have seen your kingdom at work this week through Connect Camp! We praise you for the gospel ministry that took place here this week. For the children who came to know you for the first time, and those whose relationship with you deepened further. For the many servants in your church who put their spiritual gifts to work in your church, recognizing that to be formed in the image of Christ is to serve others as Christ served.*

*Baptism. For this and so much more, Lord, we say "thank you" for bringing your kingdom realities to bear at Beech Haven this week.*

*Give us today our daily bread, Father—not just provision for our bodies, but hope for our souls. Some of us are physically hungry. Others are emotionally depleted. Some are carrying grief. Some are just tired. Would You meet us today with the nourishment of Your presence, the truth of Your Word, and the comfort of Your Spirit?*

*Forgive us our sins, Lord. Forgive us for self-reliance. Forgive us for running to other gods—our plans, our distractions, our comforts—instead of resting in You. And help us to forgive those who have wounded us, disappointed us, or abandoned us, even as You have forgiven us in Christ.*

*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Keep us from the lie that hard things equate to an unloving God. Keep us from the trap of despair. Deliver those among us today who feel too far gone to come home. Rescue the weary, the skeptical, the wounded, and the wondering. And for those just beginning to believe—those who are not sure where they stand with You—would You meet them today with mercy? Open their hearts to the gospel of Jesus,*

*who entered the silence of our suffering, bore the weight of our sin, and rose again to bring us into Your joy.*

*Yours is the kingdom. And the power. And the glory. You are not just the God of answers—you are the God who is the answer. And so we trust You. We seek You. And we praise You.*

*In the name of Jesus, our Savior, Amen.*

## Introduction

We are on the home stretch of our summer series “Real Prayers for Real Life.” Since June, we’ve looked at:

- A Prayer for Blessing in Psalm 1
- A Prayer for Forgiveness in Psalm 130-131
- A Prayer for Leadership in Psalm 2
- A Prayer for Suffering in Psalm 22
- A Prayer of Gratitude in Psalm 103
- A Prayer for Facing Fear in Psalm 91
- A Prayer for Contentment in Psalm 73

Three more to go before our next series August 10, and today we are going to look at Psalm 13, which is, at its core, a prayer for ANSWERS.

Don’t you just love having the answers? I love knowing the answer for myself, and I love having answers for others from time to time. No shortage of frustrations in my life come because I don’t know the answers, and no shortage of problems come into my life when I overextend myself in an attempt to get answers.

*For example, when I was in 8th grade, I showed up to my first class of the morning, P.E., expecting to yet again fight through my insecurities in the locker room before playing a rousing game of “Broom Ball,” when instead I was informed that it was time to take our mid-term exam. I had totally forgotten and didn’t know the answers. But guess what I had in my pocket? The answers! And I attempted to use them during the test, and **my PE teacher had an answer for that. It looked a lot like a paddle. With air holes for extra velocity and sound effect.***

Oh the lengths we will go to ... the risks we will take ... to satisfy our longing for ANSWERS.

## Body

And while I have gained more answers than I had when I was 13, the older I get, I keep uncovering more questions that seemingly don’t have answers, and the questions I have are

deeper or have more meaning associated with them. Some of them are more philosophical, but those don't unsettle us as much as those that are very practical.

I know that many of you have had some of these more practical questions because you've been in my office or a coffee shop to talk and pray about them.

- An illness or an injury in a child that seems senseless
- A marriage seemingly disintegrating and you wonder how you got here
- A job that you've lost and you're wondering how things will turn out
- A death that was shocking in part because it came so fast

In those moments and in my own life, I've noticed a tendency to try and sanitize those questions. It's as if we don't want to come across like we're doubting ... but at the same time, we want answers.

## God Welcomes our Questions in the Raw

I think that behavior usually comes from a good place, but one of the things that I love about Psalm 13 is that it shows us that ***God welcomes our questions in their most raw form***. He can handle the jumbled words. He welcomes the emotions. He is gracious with our anger and frustration and hurt. ***God welcomes our questions in their most raw form***.

This truth is on full display in the first two verses of Psalm 13. Notice how raw David's emotions and words are in this prayer.

*1) How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?*

*How long will you hide your face from me?*

*2) How long will I store up anxious concerns within me, agony in my mind every day?*

*How long will my enemy dominate me?*

David is, indeed, lamenting. There's a lot of pain and anguish in his voice. He doesn't believe God is present. He feels like he's languishing all alone. He feels defenseless and weak in his responsibilities as king. Essentially David is saying, "I have no idea where God is right now. My heart and mind are an anxious mess. And my circumstances are only getting worse and worse." We don't know the story behind the pain, but the nature of the lament tells us that it's quite severe.

In fact, he even structures the poem in a way to emphasize the severity of his pain. See how he uses the phrase "How long" four times in a row here? This is a literary technique meant to convey a build up of intensity ... like when you call for someone in the house and they don't answer, so with each call you get louder and louder (if not more and more frustrated). (***Illustrate vocally***). That's David here.

And you know, when someone does that, our response is typically, “Hey man ... lower the intensity.” That’s a phrase we use quite a bit in our home, actually. “Lower the intensity.” Because in most human environments, that kind of raw emotion is just not OK. But here’s what we see with God in Psalm 13: **God welcomes our questions in their most raw form.**

So, if you’re not seeking out God with your questions because you are concerned he can’t handle just how raw you feel, Psalm 13 (among many, many others) confirms for us that **God welcomes our questions in their most raw form.** David is neither timid nor sanitary, and we don’t have to be either. Real integrity isn’t about pretending to be okay—it’s about being honest before God and trusting Him.

## God Welcomes our Request for Answers

David doesn’t stop with raw questions. He continues in vv. 3-4 with a direct request for answers, and even presents a logical argument to back up his request. Look at vv. 3-4 with me.

*3) Consider me and answer, LORD my God. Restore brightness to my eyes; otherwise, I will sleep in death.*

*4) My enemy will say, “I have triumphed over him,” and my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.*

I know we’re not all literature majors or Hebrew word scholars, but v. 3 is so beautiful when you take the time to study the words and images being conveyed.

“**Consider**” is a request for God to look at him very closely. It’s as if David is slowly, gently, but intently reaching out and pulling the Lord’s cheek so that God will look at him ... the same way you might do with your child when you want them to really hear what you’re saying. You say it softly, meaningfully, and you are looking them right in the eye, very close to their face, and speaking softly but powerfully. That’s what David is doing in his entreat for answers.

And he addresses God as “**O LORD my God.**” This is common and powerful covenant language in the Old Testament. Here is what David is doing in this part of the prayer. *When everything in him is telling him, “God is absent,” David speaks revealed truth to himself. When his feelings and experiences are screaming at him, “GOD IS GONE” ... David speaks to himself biblical truth.* He’s saying, “You are the God who made a covenant with Adam. You are the God who made a covenant with Noah. You are the God who made a covenant with Abraham. You are the God who made a covenant with Moses and the people of Israel. You are the God who made a covenant with me.” **In the teeth of God’s felt absence,** David emphatically preaches truth to himself and gently entreats God to consider all the circumstances he’s in and turn to him and give him answers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ashe, *Psalms Commentary*

Isn't it amazing that God not only welcomes our questions in their most raw form, but that He also **welcomes our requests for answers to those questions**? I find it so fascinating that God welcomes not only the heat of our pain but also the heart of our reasoning.

In a healthy relationship, you can reason with someone you trust. One commentator I read from this week told the story of a young girl who got lost in Central Park when she was little. After what must've felt like a lifetime, her father found her—crying, shaken, safe. And after hugging him and calming down, she said something remarkable. She said, "Why did it take you so long? You're supposed to be my dad."<sup>2</sup>

Now, that's not rebellion. That's relationship. That's the logic of covenant. ***Her question wasn't proof that she didn't believe he loved her—it was proof that she did.***

That's what David does in verses 3 and 4. He doesn't just pour out his heart; he builds a case. "God, if You don't act, I'm going to die. And if I die, Your enemy is going to gloat. And if Your enemy gloats, what happens to Your name, to Your covenant, to Your glory?" It's as if David is saying, "Lord, I know You care about Your promises. So I'm not just asking for help—I'm asking in line with what You've told me about Yourself."

And the stunning thing is this: God welcomes that kind of prayer. The kind that wrestles not just emotionally, but logically. The kind that says, "Lord, based on who You are, I'm asking You to answer."

## God Answers with Himself

So, how will God respond to David? How does God respond to us when, with heat and reason, we bring our longing for answers to our questions? Take a look at vv. 5-6.

***5) But I have trusted in your faithful love; my heart will rejoice in your deliverance.***

***6) I will sing to the LORD because he has treated me generously.***

Now let's notice something that's not in verses 5 and 6—something that's conspicuously missing – There's no explanation. No divine memo. No lightning bolt. No neat theological diagram explaining the purpose of David's pain.

God doesn't say,

- "Here's why I was silent..."
- "Here's what I was accomplishing behind the scenes..."
- "Here's how long this will last and what you'll learn when it's over..."

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<sup>2</sup> Keller, Podcast talk on another text that I can't find but am sure I heard!

Nope. Nothing.

But instead of giving David an explanation, God gives him something better—a reason to trust. ***He gives him Himself. Put another way, God didn't give David the answers that he wanted, but He gave David the answers that he needed; namely, HIMSELF.***

***Sometimes we want answers, and God gives us Himself. He gives His presence, His promises, His past faithfulness as proof that He hasn't stopped being good—even if we don't understand what He's doing.***

And that, church family, is the turning point of faith: ***not when your circumstances change, but when your perspective does. When you remember who He is, even while you're still sitting in the dark.***

That's why David can say, "I will sing," before the battle is over. That's why he says, "He has dealt generously with me," even though nothing around him has visibly changed. Because God didn't explain Himself. He revealed Himself. And when God did that, David had cause for faith, love, and worship of God, all of which are far better than answers from God. That's what unwavering hope looks like—it's not blind optimism; it's trust in a God who hears, answers, and stays faithful even when the answers don't come quickly.

In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie Ten Boom tells the story about her and her sister's barracks in the concentration camp being overrun with fleas. Corrie was, understandably, furious. She asked God, "Why would You let this happen to us?" Fleas on top of everything else? But her sister Betsie insisted they thank God for everything—even the fleas.

Later, they discovered that the guards refused to enter their barracks ... because of the fleas. And that gave the women freedom to lead Bible studies and pray with the other prisoners without interference.

Ten Boom later said, "Even the fleas were part of His provision." Now, she didn't say that while scratching her arms raw. But after the deliverance, after the survival, she could look back and say, "He has treated me generously."

That's what happened to David when he came to God with questions and need for answers. He came with heat. He came with reason. Both of which God can handle. And God, in return, he got God and was led to enjoy God through all the questions.

## Conclusion

Psalm 13 shows us something remarkable about the heart of God.

**He welcomes our questions in their most raw form.** That means you don't have to clean up your grief or hide your anger to come into His presence. You can lament honestly—tears, confusion, fists clenched and all.

**He welcomes our requests for answers.** That means you can pray boldly. You can reason with God, not as a skeptic throwing stones, but as a child climbing into your Father's lap, asking Him to keep the promises He's made.

And how does God answer? Not always with explanation. Not always with quick relief. Not often with the answers we want, but always with the answer we need. **He always answers with Himself.**

**And that's the whole story of the gospel.** Because when we were crying "How long, O Lord?" under the weight of sin, God didn't send a memo—He sent a Messiah. He didn't stay far off in heaven; He came near in Jesus.

Jesus is the One who knows what it is to be abandoned, to cry out in the dark, to bear the silence of heaven so we wouldn't have to. On the cross, He took all the wrath our sin deserved. And in His resurrection, He secured for us a life where every tear will one day be wiped away and every "How long?" will be answered with joy.

So hear me: if you are not a Christian—or if you're unsure—this is what we're offering you today. Not religion. Not rules. Not a formula to get what you want. But a Person.

The One who bore your guilt, who knows your sorrow, and who invites you—even now—to trust in Him. To stop running. To stop striving. And to rest in His finished work.

If you will turn from your sin and trust in Jesus, He will meet you with mercy. He will welcome your questions, receive your cries, and answer your longing with His love. If this is you, head straight to that table outside and let us know. We'll pray today, connect this week, get you baptized, get you into a life group, and begin walking with you in this new way of life.

And church, for those of us who are in Christ already, Psalm 13 is our reminder: **Even when we don't understand what God is doing, we can still trust who He is.** Here is one of countless reasons why we always begin with Scripture—it teaches us to pray even when we don't know what to say. Maybe you've been walking with Jesus a long time, but lately you've felt the silence. Psalm 13 invites you to trust again. We can sing through tears. We can rejoice in the waiting. Because the cross proves He hasn't forgotten us, and the empty tomb proves He never will.

## Closing Prayer

*Father, We thank You that You are not a God who turns away from our questions. You welcome our cries, our confusion, even our silence. And You meet us—not always with answers, but always with Yourself.*

*When we feel forgotten, remind us that Jesus was forsaken so we would never be. When we are waiting in the dark, give us the faith to trust Your light is coming. When we are weary, help us remember Your steadfast love is never tired of us.*

*Teach us, Lord, to pray honestly, to wait patiently, and to praise You faithfully. And whether we're in verse 1 or verse 6 of our own story today, let us cling to the cross and sing—even through tears—because You have dealt generously with us.*

*In the name of Jesus, our hope and our song, Amen.*