

Psalm 42

The Message

42 ¹⁻³ A white-tailed deer drinks
from the creek;

I want to drink God,
deep drafts of God.

I'm thirsty for God-alive.

I wonder, "Will I ever make it—
arrive and drink in God's presence?"

I'm on a diet of tears—
tears for breakfast, tears for supper.

All day long
people knock at my door,

Pestering,
"Where is this God of yours?"

⁴ These are the things I go over and over,
emptying out the pockets of my life.

I was always at the head of the worshiping crowd,
right out in front,

Leading them all,
eager to arrive and worship,

Shouting praises, singing thanksgiving—
celebrating, all of us, God's feast!

⁵ Why are you down in the dumps, dear soul?
Why are you crying the blues?

Fix my eyes on God—
soon I'll be praising again.

He puts a smile on my face.
He's my God.

⁶⁻⁸ When my soul is in the dumps, I rehearse
everything I know of you,

From Jordan depths to Hermon heights,
including Mount Mizar.

Chaos calls to chaos,
to the tune of whitewater rapids.

Your breaking surf, your thundering breakers
crash and crush me.

Then GOD promises to love me all day,
sing songs all through the night!

My life is God's prayer.

⁹⁻¹⁰ Sometimes I ask God, my rock-solid God,
"Why did you let me down?

Why am I walking around in tears,
harassed by enemies?"

They're out for the kill, these
tormentors with their obscenities,

Taunting day after day,
"Where is this God of yours?"

¹¹ Why are you down in the dumps, dear soul?
Why are you crying the blues?

Fix my eyes on God—
soon I'll be praising again.

He puts a smile on my face.

He's my God.

Another popular hymn source, e.g. "As pants the heart for cooling streams", and
"Awake my soul".

Psalms 42 and 43 seem to be two parts of what was originally a single psalm: the
division being made for liturgical purposes. The first line is the title. The structure

is verses 1-4 and 6-10 as a lament, with verses 5 and 12 a cheerful refrain. Korah got things wrong (Numbers 16), but his family were Temple musicians. Whether an old man in the north of the country and unable to travel (Mount Hermon hosts the source of the Jordan, Mizar can not be identified but it means "insignificant"), or an exile in Babylon, denial of access to Temple worship hurt the faithful Jew badly. We need, as Christians, both private prayer and corporate worship.

This sort of internal conversation sounds very modern. The "soul" is highlighted seven times: souls meaning the WHOLE person. Passionate longing for the experienced presence of the Lord.

Water features in two ways: the refreshing stream for which people in a hot dry country are desperate, and the unpredictable sea that is scary to those not used to it and nervous-making for those that know the sea.

The deer is probably the Persian deer, which died out; and has been re-introduced.

Do we feel as strongly as the psalm writer; or are we in the "Nothing better to do, so I might as well go to church" category?

Is our corporate worship really corporate... or "They do, and we look on"? How do we cater both for the happy clappy enthusiasts and the solemn liturgy people? How does an act of corporate worship cater for all the moods represented in the congregation – some on a high, others wrestling with bad news? Does all-age worship work for all ages? Can the preacher or reader or prayer leader over-do the drama? Can the alleluia choir get on the nerves?