

Psalm 69 • Growing in the Darkness

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Psalm 69 is a Psalm that was very well known among the writers of the New Testament. Next to Psalm 22, it is the most quoted Psalm in your New Testament Bible. Parts of it appear in all four Gospels, Romans, and Acts. Let me show you on the screen. I can give you an outline here:

| Psalm | Quoted in NT |
|--------------|--|
| 69:4 | John 15:25 |
| 69:9a | John 2:17 |
| 69:9b | Romans 15:3 |
| 69:21 | Matthew 27:34, 48; Mark 15:36; Luke 23:36; John 19:28, 29 |
| 69:22, 23 | Romans 11:9, 10 |
| 69:25 | Acts 1:20 |

On the left, the verses from Psalm 69, or at least the references, and then where they appear. Verse 4 appears in John 15. Verse 9, the first part of verse 9, appears in John, chapter 2. The second part of verse 9 appears in Romans, Chapter 15. Verse 21 appears in all four Gospel accounts. Verses 22 and 23 occur in Romans— or are quoted, I should say— in Romans 11. And then verse 25 is mentioned in Acts, Chapter 1.

So you can see that this is an oft quoted Psalm. It is considered to be a lament from the perspective of someone who is absolutely entirely surrounded by trouble and affliction. This is an I'm in deep water, Psalm. In fact, David even uses that very phrase to describe his situation.

As I mentioned, it was written by David, but we really don't know... There are a few Psalms where it says in the introduction when David was in the stronghold, and Saul was chasing him. Or it may make reference, but the vast majority of the Psalms that are written by David are not referenced for us in terms of a specific event in David's life.

So we many times struggle to figure out what was going on in David's life when he wrote this Psalm. Many times we just frankly don't know. We also don't know, because this is quoted so often in the New Testament and in reference to

Messiah. Many people believe it is a Messianic Psalm and that word, messianic means literally, of the Messiah, or about the Messiah.

It is possible that while David is writing down some events from his experience, that the Holy Spirit is inspiring him to write in a purely prophetic sort of vein. What I mean by that is to write things that go beyond his personal experience, or even any of the events that happened in his life, to speak just purely prophetically of something that occurred or would occur in the life of Christ.

I will remind you that David wrote these things down one thousand years before Christ was born. The very fact that several of these things relate specifically to the life of Christ is amazing all on its own. If I had to guess, I would say David probably was writing at least somewhat out of his own painful trials, but obviously there is also a very clear prophetic element to these words, as evidenced by the fact that it is quoted so often and connected to Jesus. What we are going to do here this evening is to read through the entire Psalm, and then we are going to go back and look at some of the most important –or one of the most important– elements that I think comes from it.

Let's begin with prayer. Can we do that?

Heavenly Father, thank You so much for giving us Your Word. As we dig into this Psalm tonight, I pray and ask that You would open our spiritual ears and our spiritual eyes to hear from You. Lord, we dig into the Word because we believe that from it, we gain great spiritual nourishment.

We believe, Lord God, that it is truly a light to our path, a lamp to our feet. And we believe that it is food for the soul. And so we invite You, Lord, to minister Your grace through these Scriptures tonight.

Incline our ear, Lord God, to hear from You, because we confess that without Your Holy Spirit, we are lost as far as our understanding goes. We need You to fill us with truth and illuminate our hearts with understanding. We look to You, Father, in Jesus' precious name, amen.

It begins this way in Psalm 68: *“Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.”* (ESV) I'm sorry. It is Psalm 69. I hope I didn't get you off on the wrong track there.

Verse 2: *“I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. ³I am weary with my crying out;. my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. ⁴More in*

number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies. What I did not steal must I now restore?"

You can see from just these first four verses, can't you, the desperate condition that the psalmist begins to communicate to you and me related to his current circumstances. Notice all the things he says. "Save me," he says. Notice all of the illustrative comments to describe his situation.

He says, "*The waters have come up to my neck. (I seep in) I sink in deep mire, (which is just like boggy, muddy; he says,) where there is no foothold (no place to get your foot solidly in place. He says also,) I have come into deep waters.*" He talks about the flood sweeping over him, his weariness, the dimness of his eyes and so forth.

Verse 5: "*O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you. ⁶ Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel. ⁷ For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. ⁸ I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.*"

I want to have you pause there for just a moment. This is quite an attitude by the psalmist. Is it not to be in the difficulty that he's in, but to be concerned for other people, his statement is, Lord, Listen, I know there are many who have put their hope in you. Please don't let them be shamed or have their hope be dashed because of something that just happens in my life.

He says, I know there are many who seek you. Please don't let them be dishonored because my situation didn't turn out right. That's a pretty incredible attitude. But I want you to notice that David begins in verse 5 in this second section that we have been reading here by saying, "*Oh God, you know my folly,*" and folly is another word for foolishness.

He says, "*The wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.*" When we come to the Lord, and we need His grace and power, it is important that one of the first things we do before the Lord is confess our sins. That is what David is doing here. He knows he needs God's help, but he also knows that sin can stand in the way of getting where he needs to be.

Crying out to God is part of what he has come to do, but also making sure that he has confessed his sin is a vitally important part of this cry. Lord, You know

my foolishness, you know the wrong I've done. None of the stuff that I've done is hidden from your eyes, Lord. I know that. You know that.

He moves on verse 9: *“For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.”*

Have you ever— stop there for a moment— have you ever had someone become distant in your life because they knew that you are a Christian? They had some situation happen in their life where they are just not on good terms with God. Something. It could be many situations. And somehow, some way, because they know you are a believer, you represent God to them. I don't know, maybe it is the conviction they feel when you are around, but there is just something that makes them uneasy when you are around, when you are in the room, because they are uncomfortable with God.

I have to tell you, it happens to me all the time, frankly, as a pastor. If an individual is having a struggle sometime with God, they are going to have usually a very struggle sometime with me, not because I represent God in any greater way than do you. It is just that somehow in some people's minds, a pastor is just... they see them differently, and I wish it wasn't the case. I honestly wish that people wouldn't do that.

When I'm on an airplane or around somebody I don't know, and they ask me what I do. I almost don't want to tell them. Or I want to be vague, some because I don't want them to start treating me differently— because people do they treat me differently— once they find out that I'm a pastor. They put on the God-talk, and it's really annoying, to be completely honest with you.

I would rather just say to people, Well, I'm a teacher, but then they're going to ask, What do you teach? And then I go, Ethics. You can only be vague for so long or something like that, but eventually they're going to get it out of me, and they're going to go, oh, you're a pas.....

And then depending on what their relationship with God is, the rest of our conversation will be affected by that. If they're open, if they're curious, if they're responsive to the things of God, they're going to be open and curious and responsive to me. If they are shut off to the things of God, that's where the conversation is going to end.

Or it is going to be very polite conversation from that point onward. And I get that. I do. I wish it wasn't that way. But David is really saying that here, when

he says that others are responding to me because of their response to You, and it really is truly the way things go.

Verse 10. He says: *“When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. ¹¹ When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. ¹² I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards (actually) make songs about me.”* You can see where David is. He is making reference to the fact that it doesn't really matter what he does. People are going to find a reason to be critical because, if somebody wants to be critical, they're going to be critical.

Verse 13. *“But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness. ¹⁴ Deliver me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. ¹⁵ Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.*

“¹⁶ Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me. ¹⁷ Hide not your face from your servant, for I am in distress: make haste to answer me. (He's saying, Hurry up.) ¹⁸ Draw near to my soul, redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies!” Man, you can hear the desperation, can't you? The difficulty. Draw near to me, God. Don't hide your face from me. Hurry and help me.

Verse 19. *“You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. ²⁰ Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. ²¹ They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.”* That verse right there obviously is one that is quoted in the Gospel accounts because it refers specifically to Jesus Christ and the fact that he was given wine vinegar to drink when he thirsted on the cross.

This may be one of those places in the Psalm where David moves from speaking of his personal experience to the pure prophetic statement that is part of what would be fulfilled through the person of Jesus Christ.

But he goes on in verse 22: *“Let their own table before them become a snare; and when they are at peace, let it become a trap. ²³ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. ²⁴ Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them.*

“²⁵ May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents. ²⁶ For they persecute him whom you have struck down, and they recount the pain of those you have wounded. ²⁷ Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you. ²⁸ Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.”

So you can see these last verses that we have taken up here in David's prayer to the Lord are strongly against those who stand against him as an enemy. He asked the Lord to take care of it, and that is the way he takes, he deals with his own hurt and his anger toward these individuals. Lord, you take care of it. I am not going to, but you do it.

Verse 29, *“But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high. ³⁰ I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify Him with thanksgiving. ³¹ This will please the Lord more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs. (He's saying, My praise will please the Lord more than a sacrifice.)*

“³² When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. ³³ For the Lord hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.

“³⁴ Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them. ³⁵ For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and people shall dwell there and possess it; ³⁶ the offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it.”

Wow. It's quite a Psalm. A lot of the Psalms open up with praise and thanksgiving because that is what we are supposed to do. The Bible says elsewhere, *“Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise”* (Psalm 110:4)

We'll see that in the 100th Psalm when we get to it. But this Psalm is one of those where David is so under it and so beaten down that he just comes right to the Lord, and he brings his need immediately to God. And there are times like that, aren't there? I know when I start my own prayer time, I know there are times, when it's like, okay, I want to, I need to spend some time just praising the Lord.

That's a good thing to do. But there are times when it's just like, No, I have to talk to God. This is desperate. And David does that. And he begins to speak, and he begins to define for the Lord and describe for the Lord his struggling and the intensity of this painful and frightening scenario that he is in currently.

He is looking to God, but he is not being immediately taken care of. And I have to tell you something, David. I appreciate that about the Psalms. Look with me again in verse 3, would you? Verse 3 is really important because David says here, *“I am weary with my crying out.”*

You and I probably wouldn't say it that way. We would just say, God, I'm tired of coming to You and calling out. I'm tired. I'm exhausted. I'm exhausted calling out to You over and over and over again. That is what David is saying here. He says, *“My throat is parched.”* Again, you and I probably wouldn't use those exact words. You'd say, Lord, I can hardly talk anymore for all the crying out that I have offered to You.

And when he says, *“My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God,”* the idea of the eyes growing dim is literally a picture of life fading. When somebody says my eyes grow dim, it is literally they're saying, I'm dying. So David is laying it on the line here with the Lord. I'm perishing, Lord. I'm fading quickly. I'm exhausted coming to You over and over, and I don't know what to do now.

Verse 3 alone. I don't know what that sounds like to you, but what it sounds like to me is desperation met by silence. Desperation met by silence. And I don't know how you feel about that. There's something inside of us that just assumes that whenever we cry out to God, we should get an instant response. Wouldn't that be wonderful? It's just not the case.

There are times, there are some rare occasions, where the Lord has responded very quickly. But I love the fact that in the Psalms, it is not held back from us, this idea that we cry, and we cry, and we get weary of crying, and we are at the end of our ability to even cry, and we are met with silence.

That may sound like a maddening sort of reality to you. That is because it is, and it does to me too. In fact, I'll be honest with you. Relating to God can sometimes be very maddening. That comes from someone who— I love the Lord— but relating to Him can be maddening, because there are times when responses to prayer just seem to burst forth with power, and the Lord responds to what we ask of Him in this amazing and glorious sort of way. But then there are other times, and they seem pretty regular, that the roof collapses all around us, and God's presence seems a million miles away.

David is in that latter place here. The roof feels like it is collapsing. And God seems a million miles away. I don't know if you have ever been tired of waiting for God, or if you've ever felt like the life was draining out of you as you waited for God. I have heard that there are two kinds of experiences that we can have

with God. They are consolation and isolation. Consolation is obviously when we feel very close to God. We are getting ready answers to our prayers, and we can hear him talking to us, and we can see what He's doing in our lives. Isolation is when we feel distant from God. He is quiet. His presence seems nowhere to be found.

I want to talk a little bit about isolation because it is those times of feeling spiritually isolated from God that are incredibly hard. We don't necessarily ever doubt that God exists, but we certainly wonder where He is. God, where are You? Where are You in this? Let me tell you something. If you've ever felt that –I don't know if you'll get any comfort from this at all– but I'm just going to tell you that everyone, and I mean everyone, at some point in their life will experience a time of spiritual isolation.

It will happen. And then, frankly, it has nothing to do with your level of maturity. Some of the greatest saints who have ever lived and who have written of their experiences have talked about the fact that they have gone through periods of isolation, feeling like God was distant, feeling like God was removed.

Obviously one of the great saints is David because he is writing about it right here. We consider David a pretty incredible man. From the standpoint of his genuine relationship with God, his incredible soft heart, his humility and responsiveness to the Lord. And yet he went through periods of spiritual isolation.

So here's the big question on everybody's heart. Why does God allow times of spiritual isolation to take place? I wish I had an answer for everyone who asked that question, because believe me, I've had it asked of me many times. And the reason it is so difficult to answer is because God's ways are not our ways.

He told us that. In the Word, He said it very clearly, My ways are not your ways. *“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8-9). What that means is, for God to explain himself, wouldn't do any good anyway. Even if He gave you an explanation, you'd walk away going, Whatever, because you wouldn't get it.

You might just argue with Him and go, That doesn't make a lick of sense. And it probably wouldn't to you or I– or me–you or me. People write me and tell me to get that right so it's a very difficult sort of thing to say. Why do those things happen? But you know what? What I want to talk to you about is, I want to talk

about regardless of why they happen. I want you to understand something, and this is, I think, very important. Times of isolation, spiritual isolation, feeling that God is distant, those times are actually an opportunity.

They're an opportunity for spiritual growth. The reason that we can use them as an opportunity for spiritual growth is because even during those times of spiritual isolation, we are absolutely certain of one thing: that God has not brought this situation into our lives to destroy us. He has allowed it in our lives to build us up.

And that is in the Scripture where you and I are told that God works all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). People, that particular verse right there is one that you have to hang on, especially during those times of spiritual isolation. When you are feeling distant, when you are feeling just met by silence forever every cry that you offer up, you have to know that you know that you know that God is working all things together for your good, especially when you don't feel it, especially when you don't feel it.

Awhile back I saw an article that talked about things that we can... opportunities that we have during difficult seasons of life, opportunities for growth, opportunities for maturity. I want to share some of those with you. So for those of you taking notes, we'll put the title of this, Opportunities for Growth During Spiritual Isolation.

Opportunities for Growth During Spiritual Isolation

1. It's an opportunity to learn new ways to pray

Or you can take a picture of these with your phone if you don't write that fast. First of all, when you are going through a time of spiritual isolation, the first thing we'll put up here is that, **it's an opportunity to learn new ways to pray.**

There are all kinds of ways to commune with God. You and I may never ever be moved to try to seek them out unless we are going through a period of time in our lives where we are feeling the darkness closing in around us, the difficulty of our circumstances, and then we begin to ask the question. Lord, how do I press in? How do I speak to you? How do I commune with you in a better way than I've been doing?

And the reason is because, see, difficult seasons, and particularly times of isolation, become easily times of introspection. We begin to just reevaluate our

walk with the Lord. And particularly, how we pray. And people, let me just tell you something. That can be a very powerful thing, to just take inventory.

How am I talking to God? Am I talking to God or am I talking at God? Are we communing? Is there intimacy? Am I telling Him what is really on my heart, or am I just telling Him what to do? Because often that is what makes up our prayers. God do this, do this, do this, Amen. But am I telling the Lord, here is how I feel? When you read through Psalm 69, you see that David pours out his heart to God.

Now I've even talked to –or talk to– people who have gone through a difficult season, a dark season, a quiet season, where they have reevaluated the whole idea of how they pray to the point where –some people figured out that, I don't know, I seem to talk better to God when I write it down. When I write out my prayers, I mean, literally verbatim, it's like I'm writing a letter to God and inviting him to look over my shoulder and read what I'm writing, or something like that. It's like, great, wonderful. Anybody who says, Well, that's not real prayer, doesn't know a thing. It is an intimate communication between you and God.

I remember a time a few years back where I was going through a particularly challenging time, and I would get in my car, and I would drive out in the countryside. I'd drive from here to Nyssa, to Adrian, and go up to Fruitland, and come back around, and hit Weezer. And I'd just drive –I wouldn't go through the towns– I'd just drive around on the country roads, and just talk to God. But it was motivated from that time of isolation. I knew I needed to up my game, and it worked.

The fact of the matter is, maybe your ways of praying are old and tired. Maybe your way of talking to God needs to be reevaluated. You need to look at it again. If God feels distant, press in. And press in knowing this, that He wants a closer relationship with you more than you want one with Him. It is a great opportunity to find new ways to pray.

Number 2 on our list here:

Opportunities for Growth During Spiritual Isolation

- 1. It's an opportunity to learn new ways to pray*
- 2. It's the perfect time to dive into the Word*

Going through a time of spiritual isolation is a perfect time to **dive into the Word**, way more than you ever had. Even though God may seem quiet, and people will say, I've been praying, I just, I'm not hearing God speak to me.

Listen, there are 66 books in the Bible of God speaking to you. Read them. Read them. Go through them, read the Bible. And listen to His voice, because even when you can't hear Him in any other way, God is still speaking to you through His Word. He's still talking to you. And if your current way of studying your Bible isn't working, it's a great time to find a new one, a new way.

It's a wonderful time to reevaluate again and say, You know what? This isn't working, but I'm not going to put it down. That's not an option. I have to find a better way. I have to find a way that's going to really work for me. And that can be an incredible time of growth when you find that God's Word is filling your heart in new and incredible ways.

Number 3 on our list here of opportunities for growth during difficult times of isolation:

Opportunities for Growth During Spiritual Isolation

- 1. It's an opportunity to learn new ways to pray*
- 2. It's the perfect time to dive into the Word*
- 3. It's a chance to increase your connection to others*

It's a chance to increase your connection to others. Let me explain what I mean by that. When you feel isolated from God, the worst thing you can do is further exacerbate the situation by isolating yourself from people in the body of Christ.

But guess what? That's what we most often do. When we feel isolated from God, we project that into our other relationships. We stop calling people, talking to people, connecting with people. You know what the result of that is after a period of time? Guess what? We start pitying ourselves. Self-pity is one of the most destructive attitudes and emotions that we as Christians can entertain.

Because we isolate ourselves from people, and we already feel isolated from God, it just makes the crash all the harder, and we crash into depression and discouragement. Let me just say this, spending too much time with yourself is a recipe for disaster. Spending too much time thinking about yourself is a recipe for disaster.

Get out and think about other people. Get out of your cocoon. Find ways to serve. Find ways to help. Don't make your time of spiritual isolation all about you. It's just going to make it worse. Make it about other people. Care about other people, care about how they're doing, care about what they're going through. Just because you feel disconnected from God, doesn't mean you have lost the ability to be compassionate. Doesn't mean that you've lost the ability to care about what others are going through.

Number 4 on our list:

Opportunities for Growth During Spiritual Isolation

- 1. It's an opportunity to learn new ways to pray*
- 2. It's the perfect time to dive into the Word*
- 3. It's a chance to increase your connection to others*
- 4. It makes times of consolation that much more precious.*

It makes times of consolation that much more precious. When you and I are experiencing times of silence from God –isolation– we suddenly find ourselves in a place where, Man, do we appreciate times of consolation so much more.

And the comfort that we get from those becomes so much more precious, so much more real. When you're cruising along, and you're feeling close to God, and you feel like your prayers are getting answered, and you're feeling that closeness. Do you understand that is actually a potentially dangerous time for you as a believer?

Because you can become very self-absorbed also at a time like that in all your blessings, and you stop even seeing people who are hurting around you and who need compassion and need help. Let me show you what the apostle Paul wrote:

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (ESV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

In 2 Corinthians, Chapter 1, he said, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction* (that's the time of consolation), *so that we may*

be able to (convey that same consolation or) comfort (to) those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

See, my point about this whole thing is that, when you've gone through darkness, the light is so much more evident. When you've gone through times of silence, the sound of God's voice is so much more precious. When you've gone through times of difficulty, where you're crying out for comfort, and then that comfort comes, it is wonderful beyond words. We begin to take more seriously the exhortation to comfort others with the comfort we have received, because now we understand how precious it is.

Great opportunity for growth. Great opportunity for maturity. And then the fifth list:

Opportunities for Growth During Spiritual Isolation

- 1. It's an opportunity to learn new ways to pray*
- 2. It's the perfect time to dive into the Word*
- 3. It's a chance to increase your connection to others*
- 4. It makes times of consolation that much more precious.*
- 5. It gives you an opportunity to pursue God.*

It gives you a fresh opportunity to pursue God. The simple fact is God wants to have a relationship with you and me, but we need to remember that a relationship involves two people reaching out to one another. In other words, it's a two-way street.

Have you ever had a friendship with someone, and after a period of time, you start to get the idea that, I think I'm doing all the work here. It seems like I'm always the one who calls them. I'm the one who makes plans to go do things. I'm the one who suggests this and that. And, usually what happens when you do that, when you come to realize that you've got a friend who is just sitting back in the friendship, you pull back yourself, and you wait to see if they're willing to make any effort to come your way.

Now, I'm not saying that God does that to you and me. What I'm saying is that when you are feeling spiritually isolated, it's a great time to investigate if you are pursuing God like you should be. In other words, in the relationship between you and God, is He doing all the work to have that relationship, or are you showing effort?

When you're going through a difficult season, you begin to look at things like that, and you say, Am I really pressing in? Am I really pressing in to know Him? There are promises that go along with this. You probably remember, in the Book of James, it says: *“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you”* (James 4:8 ESV).

Well, that's, it's a good promise. Am I drawing near to God, or am I just crying out to God and going, ahhhh, help me! or am I really coming to Him and saying, Lord, I need to be close to You. I need to have a closer walk with You, a closer relationship with You. This religion thing isn't working, right?

Religion does not foster relationship. Religiosity does not foster relationship. Don't be religious about your approach to God. Come at Him with a relationship. I want to have a relationship with You. That is one of the reasons why David said toward the end of this Psalm, when You help me, I'm going to offer up all kinds of praise. And I know that You're going to like it a whole lot better than sacrificing an animal, because even though sacrificing a thank offering to the Lord was something God commanded.

David knew instinctively, he knew in his heart, that praising God from the heart is the real relationship. I can go take an ox and go, yeah, okay, cut it up, put it on the fire, light it up. There we go. Whoosh. And I can think that I have fulfilled my religious duty. But have I really expressed thanksgiving from the heart? That's why David says when I praise You, that's really good. That's going to bless You way more than sacrificing to You.

So. 5 things that you see up there:

Opportunities for Growth During Spiritual Isolation

- 1. It's an opportunity to learn new ways to pray*
- 2. It's the perfect time to dive into the Word*
- 3. It's a chance to increase your connection to others*
- 4. It makes times of consolation that much more precious.*
- 5. It gives you an opportunity to pursue God.*

Opportunities for growth during times of spiritual isolation. An opportunity to learn new ways to pray. Perfect time to dive into the Word. When people are going through hard times, I actually tell them to go through the Psalms. I tell them, man, when you're going through a really dark time, difficult time, your address needs to be Psalms. That's where you need to live.

Just hang out in the Psalms, because the Psalms are all about finding God. Pressing in on God, knowing God in the hard times. Number 3, a chance to increase your connection to others. Don't become inward. Number 4, it makes consolation that much more precious. And that is an opportunity for growth.

And then finally, it gives you an opportunity to pursue God more so than perhaps you have been doing up to that point. I think these are important things to remember. As we go through those difficult seasons— I know that I'm talking to people who have been through them— and you're probably not done going through them, but let's keep pressing in with faith in the midst of them, amen.

Let's keep desiring more, deeper, more, more intimate. Lord, I want to know you. I want You in my life. I want to be filled with You.