

Sermon Guide for May 17, 2026

**Sermon Title:** “Guided Prayer”

**Primary Text:** Psalm 84

While it was common in Jesus’ time to pray the psalms, it’s a practice that is largely missed today. Deitrich Bonhoeffer called the Psalms the “Prayerbook of the Saints,” and Don Whitney has written an excellent little book on how to faithfully shape our prayers around scripture (and particularly the Psalms). By letting God’s word guide us, we can be guided to pray things that may go beyond our “habitual” prayers... and we saw that as we prayed through **Psalm 84** on Sunday.

Our Psalm for this week moved from praise that God has provided a dwelling place for us, a place to belong, and a place of comfort when we go through difficult times. The “Valley of Baca” in Psalm 84:6 is a powerful image of going through periods of grief and sorrow – very much in line with our current study in the book of **Job**. Found in the middle of the psalm, it reminds us that even though there are times we move from periods of “strength to strength” during those times of sorrow we have hope because being in **His** presence is better (even if it’s delayed). Our prayer as we go through our week should be that yearn for that day we will be in **God’s Presence** for eternity as followers of Jesus Christ – and to remember that our journey through the Valley of Baca is temporary.

**Beyond our main text, Pastor Zach referenced these passages:**

Hebrews 10:34-35

Psalm 28:7

Zephania 3:17

**Questions to Consider this week:**

- The Psalm opens with a declaration that time in God’s presence is far better than time spent anywhere else. When do you find this difficult to believe?
- The Valley of Baca illustration says that there *are* times when we feel like we are moving from one moment of “strength” to the next, barely hanging on in the dark times in between. How does this Psalm remind you of who **God** is and who **you** are?
- In what ways do you resonate with the “Better is one day” phrase in verse 10? Why might you feel that it *doesn’t* resonate?
- Take one verse from this Psalm and use it as a repeated prayer this week. For instance, you might use verse 5: “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.” How might this practice help focus your prayers through this week?

**Guided Prayer**

*Lord Jesus, Thank you for giving us a guide to our prayers each week. Help me “dwell” in Your words for us in **Psalm 84** as I go through my week. I know that even if I’m not feeling like **I’m** in a Valley of Baca, there are those in our church and in the church around the world that **are** – let **them** be encouraged today, so they can go “Strength to Strength” even today. Help me find the **Joy** You promise we find in Your presence even as I pray today. -AMEN*

**Song for Personal Worship:**

“Better is One Day/Facedown” (Matt Redman)

<https://youtu.be/XEr5Wn7LHvw?si=iHVazNF5iiWomqOS>