


Songs in the Night



**Psalms
From the Man
After God's Own Heart**



Janie Craun

Publishing Designs • Huntsville, Alabama

*Let me remember my song in the night;
let me meditate in my heart.*

—Psalm 77:6, A psalm of Asaph



O Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace:
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

—Robert Robinson

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Dedication



his book is dedicated to the memory of Lorene Choate Morris, who passed from this life in 2011 at the age of 102.

Sister Morris was a wonderful mentor, taking me under her wing shortly after I was baptized at the age of fourteen. I served as her helper in a Sunday morning children's class (although I was not much older than some of them), and she sat in the class with me while I retaught the material every Wednesday night. For two years she devoted herself to making the scriptures come alive for her students as well as for me.

When I began to teach full time, I followed many of her techniques while implementing ideas of my own. I am indebted to her for lighting a spark in me in that little classroom. It has been fanned into a flame through years of working with every age from toddler to teen, as well as women. Like David, I will be eternally grateful for the rich heritage I have gained from those who feared the Lord before me.



Lorene Choate Morris

Endorsements

If you want a study that plunges into the deep end, this is it. Ancient accounts of the shepherd-king, and all that unfolded in his life, are retold in detail that rings as relevant to our trials and missteps as if it had all happened on our calendar. We are reminded of the events that first breathed the psalms, and are guided to find our own solace in our personal songs in the night.

—Celine Sparks, author of *If Mama Ain't Happy* and
How to Train Your Dragon, Huntsville, Alabama

Read and study this book! In these thirteen chapters, I learned more of David's history, family and timeline than from anything else I've read about him outside of scripture. It is rich in Old Testament history and full of Israel's geography. In *Songs in the Night*, Janie Craun composed a concise, fascinating biography of the life of David, all the while demonstrating parallels between him and the reader.

Admire the great leader and man of God, but also his humanity and frailty. It's impossible to ignore your own faults, as his are so readily admitted and exposed. Dig deep to find answers to research questions. I wholeheartedly recommend this book for personal study, for self-reflection, and for spiritual growth.

—Carla Moore, dean of women,
Bear Valley Bible Institute, Denver, Colorado

I love how Janie unites history with poetry by walking through David's life to bring greater understanding of the psalms he wrote. Join this study to see what was really going on when the "sweet psalmist of Israel" praised, cried, or questioned with his inspired pen. Let Janie guide you in writing your own personal "songs in the night." You'll never read these psalms the same again.

—Kathy Pollard, author of
Return to Me, Bowling Green, Kentucky

Songs in the Night is like a warm, cozy blanket of the beautiful truths from the man after God's own heart. Janie's book is well-written, well-researched, and filled with practical applications. Wrap yourself in the comfort, encouragement, and inspiration that will become a song in your heart.

—Debbie Dupuy, author of *It's a Red-Letter Day* and
The Shepherd's Daughter, Florence, Alabama

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Introduction



Many Bible characters have become familiar to us through the pages of Scripture. Some were noteworthy for acts of heroism or piety, while others possessed less honorable traits. But it is fair to say that none of these, aside from our Lord himself, is more familiar to readers than the man known simply as David. His life story spans some forty chapters in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel as well as most of the book of 1 Chronicles. Seventy-three of the psalms are attributed to him, and New Testament authors reference him more than thirty times. The wealth of attention given to David helps to explain why, some three thousand years later, we find the study of his life and writings so fascinating.

We pay great attention to last words, don't we? David's last recorded words are no exception.

Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel. The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue (2 Sam. 23:1–2).

David's final thoughts reflect the great confidence he felt in his relationship with God. He recognized that the Lord had raised him up and anointed him as king for a purpose, and he claimed that the Lord's Spirit was speaking through him, a statement that Jesus would confirm in Mark 12:36. The New Testament also commends him as a great hero of faith in Hebrews 11:32–34. But no commendation can surpass what was spoken by the Almighty himself—that here was “a man after [God's] own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14).

Women have often taught children about David, the shepherd boy who killed a Philistine giant. Do you think of him as Israel's greatest king? Or are you most impressed that he was a poet and a skilled musician? Realistically, scripture reveals that he had faults and, like many powerful people, he could be headstrong and prone to rash decisions. One of those decisions led him to plot the death of a faithful and honored servant after

having sexual relations with the man's wife. These and other human passions left lasting stains on his life and legacy; but despite his frailties, David was loved by the people as no other king in Israel's long history.

What has endeared this man of obvious flaws to throngs of people? Perhaps it was his willingness to take ownership of his sins, as revealed in many of his psalms that we will study. In these petitions we will examine David's dependence upon the Lord, knowing that his only hope for forgiveness was through God's grace.

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin (Ps. 32:1-5).

Close your eyes and feel the gratitude David felt in experiencing God's mercy which often overflowed into song.

I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God (Ps. 40:1-3).

Sometimes, in the middle of the night, David must have lain awake thinking about how very good God is. Perhaps it was during the night watches that he rose to compose words such as these in Psalm 63:

Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy (Ps. 63:3-7).

We women connect with this mortal man because, like him, we fall far short of God's will for us. Often, we are at a loss for words to express our praise and gratitude for his grace. It is then that we go to Psalms for help in wording our prayer song. This one says it well:

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you,
O God . . . By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and
at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life
(Ps. 42:1, 8).

I hope you will enjoy digging with me into the rich history of this man of God. We will look at some of David's own words, as well as those of other writers in the book of Psalms. Many of their poetic verses were meant to be sung. Some of them include superscriptions—notations added by scribes to identify when and why the psalm was written. These songs serve as companions to the historical accounts of David's life, allowing us to delve into the very heart and soul of one who recognized his failures and longed to know God's forgiveness.

In David, we find our own assurance that God is near when *we* seek him. Perhaps it is this willingness to humble ourselves in total submission to God that determines whether any of us can truly be called a person after God's own heart.

*Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;
Listen to my plea for grace.*

—A Prayer of David, Psalm 86:6

Love,

Janie Craun



My Heritage Is Beautiful to Me

Psalm 16:16 NASB

The Youth

Scripture

“How can a young man keep his way pure?” (Ps. 119:9).

Inside This Chapter

Heritage, Obedience, Animosity, Providence, Promise, Faith

My Personal Study


Genesis 12:1–3; 24:1–4; 35:19–20; 49:10; Ruth 4:18–20; Psalm 16:6



Background

Following God's call, Abraham had settled in Canaan, and God had promised to give the patriarch's descendants the land for an inheritance. Three generations and their descendants would make Canaan home before the clan would relocate to Egypt. Then, after four hundred years, these children of Abraham have finally returned to the promised land where a specific area has been allotted to each individual tribe. The descendants of Judah have settled near the place where Bethlehem was located.

The sweet psalmist of Israel was a direct descendant of Abraham according to the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Stories about the early patriarchs must have been as familiar to David as our own family history is to us. More so, in fact, because the telling and retelling of their past formed the core of each generation's education.



Even as a youth, David would have heard many stories about his ancestors. He knew how God had called Abraham to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and journey to the land of Canaan. Every Israelite knew it was because of Abraham's obedience that God fulfilled a promise to make his descendants into a great nation. They knew about Abraham's grandson Jacob, whom God renamed Israel, and about his journey to find a wife among his mother's kin. That journey turned into a twenty-year sojourn in which Jacob acquired a large family and sizable wealth.

David would have known that Jacob had twelve sons and that his own ancestor was Judah, a son of Jacob's wife Leah. It is likely that Judah's descendants had preserved the story of how animosity developed among the brothers in this polygamous family and how it was Judah who acted as Joseph's savior when the other sons would have killed him (Gen. 37:25–28). As a result, Joseph was carried away to Egypt where he eventually rose to power and preserved his entire family along with millions of others during a time of famine. Judah had served unknowingly as an instrument of God's providence (Gen. 45:4–8), and his father would bless him, prophesying that the scepter would not depart from his family (Gen. 49:10).

Locate the tribes of Judah and Benjamin on the map on page 153.

Like every other Israelite, David was familiar with the story of Moses, whom God used to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the edge of the promised land. Once there, the tribe of Judah had settled in the area where Bethlehem was located. David's great-grandfather Boaz was among those living there in the days of the judges (Ruth 1:2; 4:11). We can assume that his grandfather Obed was also born there as was David's father, Jesse, and David himself. It is significant that Bethlehem had also been the burying place of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel, so David was blessed with a rich family history that would greatly influence the direction of his life.



Despite its ancient past, no one living in the town of Bethlehem when David was a little boy could have foreseen its significant future. They could not have known that a thousand years later the coming Messiah would also be born there or that the prophet Micah, seven hundred years before that great event, would be given this vision:

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days (Micah 5:2).

Name three significant events that took place in the town of Bethlehem. (See Gen. 35:19; 1 Sam. 16:4-13; Ruth 1:16-19; and Luke 2.)

As a boy David could not possibly have envisioned the role he would play in this great plan. But God knew, even before David was born. Eventually, David came to understand that God's providence had been at work in his life, as well as in the lives of his ancestors. He wrote about it in Psalm 139:

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance, in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them (Ps. 139:15-16).

In time, David could look back over his life and see the great blessings that were his in having such a heritage. He would acknowledge: “The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me” (Ps.16:6 NASB).

He recognized that an important part of that heritage was the record of how his ancestors had been blessed for putting their trust in God. The history of their deliverance would bring comfort in his own times of trouble.

In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.
To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and
were not put to shame (Ps. 22:4–5).

From Psalms 16:6 and 22:4–5, consider the physical and spiritual heritage of David: boundaries from God and trust in God. Comment as to how you have that heritage today.



Today's Childhood: Tomorrow's Heritage

Little is known about David's childhood. In 1 Samuel 16 and 17 we read that his father Jesse had eight boys, with David being the youngest. First Chronicles 2:13–17 names only seven sons, and again, David is the youngest, suggesting that one of his siblings might have died by the time the family lineage was recorded in the Chronicles. David also had two sisters, Zeruihah and Abigail. Some speculate that Abigail was possibly a half-sister, since her father is said to have been Nahash the Ammonite (2 Sam. 17:25). Scholars differ in their efforts to explain this puzzle, suggesting that Jesse could have been her stepfather or that Nahash might have been her grandfather.

We know that David's sister Zeruihah became the mother of three boys. Their names were Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Abigail had a son named Amasa, and all four nephews played a significant role in David's later life.

David's mother is never named in scripture, but it is reasonable to assume that she was a believer in God. In Psalm 86:16, David writes that he is the son of God's maidservant. He also references his mother in a prayer in which he reminds the Lord of his devotion to him since birth.

Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts. On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God (Ps. 22:9–10).

What can we learn from the words “from my mother's womb”? How does this passage especially relate to women?

David had inherited more than a God-fearing ancestry. He was gifted in so many other ways. Handsome, outgoing, strong, and fearless, he also possessed a sensitive nature. Even as a youth, his musical talent, along with his ability to speak and write poetically, were obvious to others.

And David had been given one more thing—something that is not often viewed as a gift by those who are young. He had a father who required him to work and to be responsible. As the youngest son, it eventually became his job to tend the family's sheep, a task the older brothers were probably happy to pass on to him. It seems, however, that David relished the time spent in the out-of-doors and took pride in caring for his father's flock. He understood their needs and proved himself capable of handling this responsibility at an early age.



Experience Offers the Best of Heritage

It may be that the Twenty-third Psalm was written during David's early years, though he might just as easily have composed it later, after he had experienced God's providential care in so many ways. It is considered by many to be the most beautiful of all the psalms.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
death, I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

— Psalm 23

David must have taken his responsibility seriously. He knew where to find the best pastureland and water. He was aware that his sheep needed to rest after grazing so their food could digest. He knew that sometimes a sheep could become “cast” or “cast down” if it rolled onto its back and was unable to get up. This condition could lead to death unless the animal was set upright by the shepherd. Surely he spent time every day checking the flock and restoring the fallen, and he saw in this act a picture of God’s watchful care over his flock. He would eventually recognize also how vitally important restoration is when one has been cast down by sin.

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God (Ps. 42:11).

Why might Psalm 42:11 have been a reference to such a scene as restoring a cast down sheep? How can this passage help us during difficult times?

Caring for his sheep required David to move them from pasture to pasture, sometimes along dangerous paths. The way might frequently be narrow, but he was adept at using his rod and his staff to fend off predators or to rescue one that had fallen (1 Sam. 17:34–37). In the summer, perhaps

David led them up to the high tableland where pasture remained plentiful. But there were dangers there as well, such as snakes and wild animals. And such areas were often beset with annoying flies and parasites that attacked the sheep's noses, so David knew how to anoint their heads with oil or salve to prevent them from becoming agitated.

Phillip Keller's book, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, is written by one who was also a shepherd and well-acquainted with the needs of sheep. In it, he notes another significant characteristic of sheep: they must be free from fear before they will lie down to rest. It is easy to imagine David settling his flock with his lyre in hand. Perhaps it was during times like these when, alone with God, he focused on the beauty of nature. In the evenings, especially, lying under a star-filled sky must have stirred thoughts of praise like these:

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard (Ps. 19:1-3).

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? (Ps. 8:3-4).

How long has it been since you looked up and considered the greatness of God and the smallness of mankind? Why not memorize Psalm 8:3-4 and make this text a part of your prayers this week?

It is interesting that David wrote the Twenty-third Psalm from the standpoint of a sheep rather than a shepherd. He always recognized that God was his keeper. He trusted that the God of his ancestors would provide for his every need, as he had provided for their needs. This faith had been instilled in him at an early age. And even though David would stray at times in his life, he never chose to leave the Good Shepherd in whom he trusted.



In Tune with the Word

1. List three things included in God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3.

2. What did David come to understand about his birth and God's part in it (Ps. 139:15–16)?

3. Job 22:29 says, “When you are cast down, you will speak with confidence, and the humble person He will save” (NASB). Compare this meaning of “cast down” with that of Jeremiah 6:15 and 2 Corinthians 4:9 (KJV). Discuss.

4. What do you think it means to be a person after God's own heart? Read Acts 13:22.





5. How did David's experiences as a shepherd help to shape his life?

6. Look at David's ancestral line found in Matthew 1:1–6. Take a look at the four women mentioned in this passage. Who are they, and why are their stories important?



My Night Song

How much thought have you given to the role of God's providence in your life? Let's focus on blessings that are not material in nature.

-  Be grateful for all those who have contributed to your understanding of right and wrong.
-  Remember people who taught you from the earliest years in Bible class or by example.
-  Call to mind those who provided some basic needs or showed you love or helped you acquire certain skills.
-  What special teacher, friend, or co-worker had a great impact on the direction your life has taken?

Consider writing a note to one or more of those people to express your appreciation. Make a short list, and in your night prayer thank God for them by name.



I know not why God's wondrous grace
to me He hath made known.
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love
redeemed me for His own.
But I know Whom I have believed,
and am persuaded that He is able
to keep that which I've committed
unto Him against that day.

—D. W. Whittle, 1883



The Lord Saves His Anointed

Psalm 20:6

The Future King

Scripture

“Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand” (Ps. 20:6).

Inside This Chapter

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My Personal Study

1 Samuel 8–17; Psalm 19:13–14