Hi,

Today’s updates:

* My 11am Sunday class will be the third in the series, *The New Testament in Seven Sentences*. As always, we will meet on [my personal Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/scottengle).
* My 3pm Monday class on Matthew and my 12:00 noon Tuesday class on Genesis will meet next week, also on my personal Facebook page.
* The links to my on-line classes, the video recordings of the classes, the class audio podcasts, and the archive of these daily emails can all be found at [www.scottengle.org](http://scottengle.org/scotts-weekly-classes/). All the postings are up-to-date.
* I’ve been told that my YouTube page/channel can be hard to find. A simple solution would be to [go to the link (here)](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChtwqaUcpZbwyTWnkp6INwQ?view_as=subscriber) and then bookmark the page or subscribe to my channel. Also -- all the “covid” Sunday classes since March are on the YouTube page, not the Vimeo page we used when we were meeting in person (the archived videos are all still there, going back a number of years). One of these days, I’ll figure out how to also post the Sunday “covid” videos on Vimeo. . . . one day. ;)
* The Weekly Bible Study for this weekend is attached.

Being Friday, here is the latest “Scribblings in the Midst of Chaos,” from Lauren Sandstedt, one of our summer interns from Perkins.

“As someone who so passionately cares about word choice, meaning and sentiment that is packed into elaborate writing . . . I am also quite fond of simplicity some days. Today, is one of those days.

In the NRSV translation, Psalm 3 is titled “*Trust in God under Adversity”.* Over the years, I have prayed verse 4, for many times and for many reasons. Repeating this verse in my head. The term *Selah*, is a common phrase in the psalms that is intended to evoke the idea of 'stop and listen'.

Though it appears simple, this verse is reflective of God’s fullest essence. One who desires to hear us and answer us. To be in relationship with us. In the world around us today, I pray that you also might find this verse available for your specific prayers . . . in many times, and for many reasons.”

**Psalm 3:4**

**“I cry aloud to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy hill. . . . *Selah”***

**Amen.**

Lauren’s words caused me to reflect on the Psalms as well, these ancient prayers to the God who was, is, and always will be. In the Psalms, we discover the prayers of our own hearts.

**Psalm 34:8, 17-18 (The Message)**

**Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see—how good God is.**

**Blessed are you who run to him.**

**Is anyone crying for help? God is listening, ready to rescue you.**

**If your heart is broken, you’ll find God right there; if you’re kicked in the gut, he’ll help you catch your breath.**

**Disciples so often get into trouble; still, God is there every time.**

**Psalm 63:1 (NRSV)**

**O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you,as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.**

In Psalm 63, the psalmist stands with open mouth, thirsting for God, hungering for God, praying to God, praising God. He thinks about God at night, in the dark. The psalmist’s soul clings to God like a child that clings to its mother. The psalmist lifts up his hands to God, calls God by name, and trusts God. What a powerful image of someone who has given themselves over to God completely, holding nothing back. Someone who has dropped all pretensions to self-sufficiency. Someone who has transcended the world’s appetites.

Likewise with Psalm 34. “Open your mouth and taste how good God is.” No wonder the psalmist can’t wait to get the words out. He has found his true home and met the God who has always been there.

Do the psalmists describe your own relationship with God? For what or whom do you hunger? What do you think about at night? For many Christians, these images can be a bit intimidating or at least very “other,” certainly not describing themselves. The world seeks to cultivate very different appetites in us and often succeeds.

Yet, such joyful thirsting and fulfillment is not some impossible ideal nor the privilege of a special few. Rather, it is available to us all. God desires it for us all. It is this for which we were made and for which our souls long.

Still, for many of us, the question is where do we begin?

*How to pray (and how not to)*

In the very center of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus turns to the subject of prayer. But before teaching his disciples to pray, Jesus warns them about the basics. They are not to be hypocrites. They are not to pray so that everyone can see what good “pray-ers” they are. They are not to pile up a bunch of empty phrases in their prayers. In all this, Jesus is pushing his disciples toward prayer that is grounded in sincerity and honesty, humility and forgiveness – these are the basic ingredients of prayer that is grounded in true faith! Why?

Because prayer is conversation with God; conversation that must be grounded upon trust. So, just as we strive to be sincere and forthright with those we trust, there can be no hypocrisy or deceit in our prayers to God. The psalmists are sometimes incredibly angry with God and they don’t hesitate to voice their anger. Of course they don’t hesitate; they trust God!

Though prayer consists of more than our words, setting aside time for deliberate prayer is important, even essential. Here are a few tips that many Christians have found helpful as they work toward a deeper prayer life:

* *Don’t just think the words . . . say them.* A wandering mind is one of the biggest hurdles to a rich prayer life and it happens to all of us. Actually speaking the prayer will help you stay on track.
* *Don’t just pray about what you’d like God to do.* Tell God how you feel. Make time to give thanks and even to be honest with God about your mistakes or failures. Try to be specific in your prayers. It is a time to unburden yourself.
* *Keep a prayer list.* Most of us trouble remembering everything on the fly.
* *Pray in this way daily . . . and don’t be afraid to start small*. Even five minutes a day is a start. Too many people never start because they intimidate themselves right from the beginning.
* *Say grace before each meal.* This seems like such a small thing, but you’ll find that it helps you to stay more aware of God all day. If the setting is inappropriate for you to pray aloud, even a silent word of grace will be meaningful.

‘til Monday, grace and peace,

Scott