

Psalm 42

Psalm 42 is about the longing, a profound desire for God's presence and communal worship.

It expresses wrestling with doubt, depression, and external opposition.

It ends with a conscious choice to keep trusting and looking forward to God's salvation.

The psalm begins with the imagery of a deer panting for water - the soul's desperate need for:

God in the midst of trial, enemies and spiritual dryness.

God refreshes us and restores us when we spend time with him.

Spiritually the deer symbolizes gentleness, grace, intuition and new beginnings.

The Psalm helps us understand that we must “thirst for God, the living God” in order to be fully satisfied.

1. Understand that we are not capable of satisfying our own spiritual needs.
2. We need to set aside time to fully focus on God and communicate to him through prayer what is going on in our lives, what are our doubts and needs.
3. We need to listen to God. By taking time to sit quietly and listen to what God is saying.
4. Spend time with fellow Christians in study and worship.

The psalmist has not lost the belief in God but is just feeling God’s presence and love like the body’s need for water. Have you ever done something strenuous or been active and had that thirst for water? Your mouth is parched and when you drink a glass of water how it quenches your thirst. It is amazing and so refreshing.

In our spiritual lives we can feel dry and far from God. Wondering if God is there in the midst of troubles. We may get out of touch with Christian friends, miss church, don’t attend Bible Study or Sunday school. We are in a spiritual drought. We can find ourselves thirsting for God, for our spiritual water.

The hymn “As the Deer” was written by Martin Nystrom in 1984.

The story behind the song “As the Deer” is this:

In 1984 Martin Nystrom was a school teacher in Seattle. With the summers off he decided to go back to Bible College and went to Dallas, Texas to the Christ For the Nations Institute. He had no idea what was about to happen to him. He was exposed to so much at the school, especially the worship emphasis. His roommate at CFNI was a vibrant Christian and challenged Martin to fast - a period of time when a person refrains from eating solid food and spends time reading the Bible and prayer.

Martin took the challenge and on the 19th day of the fast he was sitting at a piano trying to write a song. He noticed a Bible on a music stand open to Psalm 42. The first verse caught his eye... “As the deer panteth after water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.” He instantly began to sing the first verse and the chorus of a song, pretty much straight through. This all happened in minutes.

He was not going to show the song to anyone. It was his own devotional time with the Lord. However, before he left the school to head back home he did share it with one person, Dave Butterbaugh (known as an outstanding worship leader and teacher), who introduced it to the

school and it became a favorite. Since then it is sung in worship services all over the world and has been translated into several languages.

I personally love this song, the tune, and the meaning of the lyrics, it speaks to my heart. I too have had a longing for God, a spiritual thirst at times to be nearer to Him.

The structure of the song goes like this:

Verse 1: Focuses on the soul's thirst for God.

Refrain: "You alone are my strength, my shield;

To You alone may my spirit yield.

You alone are my heart's desire,

And I long to worship Thee.

Verse 2: Highlights God as a friend, brother, and King.

Refrain:

Verse 3: Expresses a greater desire for God than riches.

Refrain:

One of the reasons I chose Psalm 42 for my devotion was to be able to play this song on my flute and share it with you. Please listen as I begin, and then join in singing the verses. May it touch your heart as it has touched mine.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for the book of Psalm, thank you for music, thank you for your love and your word that helps us grow closer to You!

