



## Lesson 1: Discipleship

This series based on the book by Eugene Peterson called *A Long Obedience In The Same Direction; Discipleship In An Instant Society*. In it are lessons on the Ascent Psalms that can help us travel this road of long obedience together as God's people. I have adapted his lessons for this series of sermons that will hopefully bless you and lead you closer to Christ and to heaven!

*If you're worn out in this footrace with men, what makes you think you can race against horses? (Jeremiah 12:5 NASB)*

### **I. Tourists & Pilgrims**

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13 KJV)*

What is a tourist?

Many people in the world claim to be born again Christians but there is little evidence for maturity for being a disciple of Christ. We want religion, God, and spiritual growth to be packaged freshly or we lose interest. In other words, many people who are religious have the tourist mindset.

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, "The essential thing 'in heaven and earth' is...that there should be long obedience in the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living."

What is a pilgrim?

As pilgrims we are people who spend our lives going someplace, that place leads to God and the path is clear and simple, it is Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 11:13-16 NASB)

The Hebrew writer defines our program,

*Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. (Hebrews 12:1-2 The Message)*

## **II. The Songs Of Ascents (Psalms 120-134)**

What are these songs?

In the Old Testament there are these fifteen Psalms known as the Songs of Ascents in Hebrew. These were likely sung perhaps in sequence by Hebrew pilgrims that went up to Jerusalem to the worship festivals.

But the ascent was not only literal it was also a metaphor. The trip to Jerusalem acted out a life that was upward, toward God, spiritual maturity in a sense.

*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)*

*the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. (Philippians 3:14 The Message)*

Three times a year faithful Jews make the trip to worship (Exodus 12:14-17; 34:22-24). These people in Exodus who were saved by God, whose identity was defined at Sinai as the people of God, they were to travel to Jerusalem to worship and praise God.

This picture of the Hebrews singing these 15 ascent psalms as they left their homes, towns, farms, and cities as pilgrims up to Jerusalem is a way we can put into our imagination, our own lives in this faith-journey walk with Jesus.

## **III. The In Between Times**

Have you noticed in life that there are these in between times? For example, the time we leave home and arrive at our destination; between the time we leave adolescence and reach adulthood; between the time we leave doubt and arrive at faith.

These Psalms we will be studying together are made to be sung in the in between times. The time we leave the world's conformity and arrive at the Spirit's assembly; between the time we leave sin and arrive at holiness; between the time we leave home on Sunday morning and arrive at church with God's people.

For those of you who would choose to no longer be tourists but as pilgrims, the Songs of Ascents combine all the joy and cheerfulness of a travel song with practicality of a guidebook and map. Their brevity is described by William Faulkner, "They are not monuments, but footprints. A monument only says, At least I got this far, while a footprint says, this is where I was taken when I moved again."

Here are the upcoming lesson titles and the Ascent Psalm they are connected to...

Repentance – Psalm 120  
Providence – Psalm 121  
Worship – Psalm 122  
Service – Psalm 123  
Help – Psalm 124  
Security – Psalm 125  
Joy – Psalm 126  
Work – Psalm 127  
Happiness – Psalm 128  
Perseverance – Psalm 129  
Hope – Psalm 130  
Humility – Psalm 131  
Obedience – Psalm 132  
Community – Psalm 133  
Blessing – Psalm 134