

Psalm 56 Personalized For the Experience of a School Shooting

Psalm 56 ESV	Psalm 56 Personalized
<p><i>To the choirmaster: according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths. A Miktam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.</i></p>	<p><i>To my soul: when I feel small, powerless, and far away from God's presence. A poem of talking to God and my own soul in the aftermath of chaos breaking out at my school.</i></p>
<p>¹ Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me; all day long an attacker oppresses me;</p>	<p>¹ God, I need your grace and strength. I had no idea a fellow student could mangle my life this much. All day, in my imagination; all night, in my dreams, the shooter haunts my mind. I want to escape the memories, but I can't.</p>
<p>² my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly.</p>	<p>² There are people – plural – who do these vile things. They trample lives, on random days, without warning or explanation. I remember hearing his taunts and laughter between shots.</p>
<p>³ When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.</p>	<p>³ Each time I remember, I'm freshly afraid; my mind races, my pulse quickens, my pupils dilate. When the threat is lodged in my memory, the only source of hope I have is you. No one else can touch the place where my fear resides. Please, touch the part of my mind that needs to be calmed.</p>
<p>⁴ In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?</p>	<p>⁴ I trust you God. Thank you for your word that says, "I believe, help me unbelief." That is how I'm praying right now. I trust you God. Just saying your name reminds me I am never as alone as I felt in those moments. I have seen the worst that one person can do to another and yet here I remain with you. That gives me hope amid my fear.</p>
<p>⁵ All day long they injure my cause; all their thoughts are against me for evil.</p>	<p>⁵ Even now – days, weeks, months later – his actions disrupt my life. There is no way he could believe he was doing something "good." In that moment, he had to know his actions were evil and he did it anyway.</p>
<p>⁶ They stir up strife, they lurk; they watch my steps, as they have waited for my life.</p>	<p>⁶ It is disturbing to realize these shooters plan, like hunters, tracking the school schedule like deer. He planned, he waited, and he acted with the intent to kill.</p>

<p>⁷ For their crime will they escape? In wrath cast down the peoples, O God!</p> <p>⁸ You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?</p> <p>⁹ Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. This I know, that God is for me.</p> <p>¹⁰ In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise,</p> <p>¹¹ in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?</p> <p>¹² I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you.</p>	<p>⁷ How do you begin to define “justice” for an action like this? What punishment can satisfy the impact of his crime? God, I entrust this shooter to your wrath because there is no other way justice could be served.</p> <p>⁸ God, you are big enough to serve eternal justice, but you are also personal and compassionate enough to notice my inability to sleep. You know the number of my tears like you know the number of hairs on my head because every part of my life is precious to you. You keep up with every aspect of life like a new parent charting the height, weight, first words, and first steps of their child in a baby book.</p> <p>⁹ Because you care for me this personally, I know I can always call on you. My enemy, Satan, wants to use the fear related to this event to convince me I am alone. I know that is a lie. You are with me, for me, and patient as I struggle.</p> <p>¹⁰ I need that comfort now, more than ever. Thank you that you are the Good Shepherd, who patiently <i>walks</i> with his sheep in places and times that feel like the valley of the shadow of death. You are Yahweh, I am that I am, the God who never changes, the God who hears, the God who wipes tears.</p> <p>¹¹ I trust you. Because of who you are, I can learn to feel safe again. I have seen the worst that one person can do to another and yet here I remain with you. That gives me hope amid my fear.</p> <p>¹² I covenanted with you, O God. You have kept your vow to me. You are with me. You are a refuge even now, in my fears. I want to keep my vow to you. I want to say “thank you” even amid my fear.</p>
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¹³For you have delivered my soul from death,
yes, my feet from falling,
that I may walk before God
in the light of life.

¹³It's true. I could have died. While an experience like this tempts me to walk away and hide from everything I once found meaningful, you have kept me.

So much in this world is dark. Recent events have taught me how dark darkness can be. But you are a God of light. The only way I know to escape the darkness that feels so looming is to keep moving towards you.