A person is walking away from the camera on a large sand dune. The dune is golden-brown and has a long, dark shadow cast to its left. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The person is wearing a blue shirt and light-colored shorts. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Anna Johnstone

*The
Psalm
Walk*

SAMPLE PAGES ONLY



Psalm 20:1,2 In the day of your trouble, may the Lord be with you! May he keep you from all harm. May he send you aid from his sanctuary...

Rush hour traffic as we cross Auckland Harbour Bridge when, without warning the engine cuts out

My fast-thinking man quickly steers us onto the tiny sliver between two lanes and switches on the hazard lights

We sit, stunned, shaken bounced about as trucks and cars hurtle past us with the narrowest of margins

My heart thumps madly as I try to explain to the young Japanese girl in the back seat that this is an adventure and that we're quite safe while all the time my spirit cries out to you, Jesus imploring you to help us so we're not the latest statistic on the next news bulletin

The wait seems forever till flashing lights signal the arrival of a seriously-welcome police officer who calmly announces he'll soon have us out of there

Again we wait as other cops frustrate Friday nighters rushing home by diverting all traffic from two lanes

Our reassuring rescuer then pushes us across the now-empty lane and we free-glide down the other side where we wait in the growing darkness for the AA to arrive and explain about broken cam belts

I'm so glad I can yell for your help any time, Jesus

Sometimes the wait is longer than it was on the bridge but I can hang on knowing you're always with me knowing you have all the answers and trusting that your timing is perfect

Psalm 37:34 Don't be impatient for the Lord to act! Keep travelling steadily along his pathway and in due season he will honour you with every blessing.

Moses had it easy, really even if stone slabs were a bit heavy to lug about

I think of others you gave specific instructions to and remember Noah

There's no way he could have built the ark without precise measurements from you, God even if the thought of such a huge craft nearly blew his mind

Joshua and the troops knew exactly how many times to circle Jericho and Paul knew the street he had to go straight to even if he couldn't find it himself

I think I'm trying to persuade you, God that we need a hand here or a word, actually

It wouldn't hurt to break the silence to give us a clue or to come right out with it

You smile gently and I sigh

So, no voice in the thunder? No writing on the wall?

It feels like one of those tense TV dramas where the clock is ticking and there are impossible things to be discovered in an impossibly short time

But you say you've never been late yet

That nothing's got away from you

That really, everything is fine

I sigh again, reluctantly back at base camp till the weather clears and I can see the summit

Psalm 50:7-15

They thought you'd be impressed by the smell of roast beef pacified by the number of goats on the fire

That they'd stay in your good books so long as they kept the sacrifices coming

You say, Forget the prezzies come to my party Open your hearts to me let me love and protect you

You show them a different hunger, God your longing for relationship for feeling over form

Wow! That would stun them

Times have changed Burnt offerings are old hat now but are our hearts the same?

Do we feel very important because we have so much to do?

Squeeze you into our crowded schedule?

Try to keep you happy with all our busyness?

Placate you with good works?

Offer good deeds on the altar of religiosity?

But still you call us, God Still you long still you hope that we'll wake up to the fact that earning Brownie points for lots of activity is not what it's all about

That you want us for who we are not for what we can do for you

That you want us to want you for who you are not for what you can do for us

I hope you can be patient a bit longer, God

This could take a while to sink in



*Psalm 65:8 Dawn and dusk
take turns calling, "Come and
worship."*

We waited in Louvre-long
queues to see
the Mona Lisa
ending in front of
a surprisingly small canvas



Really? I thought
That's it?

The enigmatic smile
glanced down at us
with a kind of lofty
stand-offishness

Apparently Leonardo
took four years
to paint this masterpiece and
Napoleon once had it hanging
on his bedroom wall

The world's most
famous painting
now hangs behind
bullet-proof glass
never to be removed from
its fiercely-protected home

I prefer large canvases
I think you do too, God
I know from the sky aflame
with colours of passion
and lights of gold

You paint a masterpiece
twice every day
each one different
your love splashed
exuberantly

Each sunrise
each sunset perfect
inviting our hearts
to turn to yours
to breathe loving thankfulness
and adoration

Actually, God, I think
each one is a practice
as you keep your hand in
for THE DAY

The day all heaven
and earth waits for
the date known
only to you

Then all your practice
will result in the most
splendiferous
stupendous
magnificent
mind-blowingly
beautiful skies
you've ever created
for the day
Jesus comes back
gathers us
in his arms of love
and takes us
home

Psalm 107

The old song
'Love makes the world
go round'
comes to mind
as I read this psalm

Your people mucked about
and messed things up
yet still you persisted
in coming to their rescue
still you kept your promises
still you showed your love

You are love, God
through and through
Not a veneer over plywood
not a dusting of icing
over a slice of cake

In fact, if we drilled
right through you
took a core sample
it would be
love, love, love
all the way

Because your whole being
your absolute main thing is love
and because we are made
in your image, God
the main part of us
must be love, too

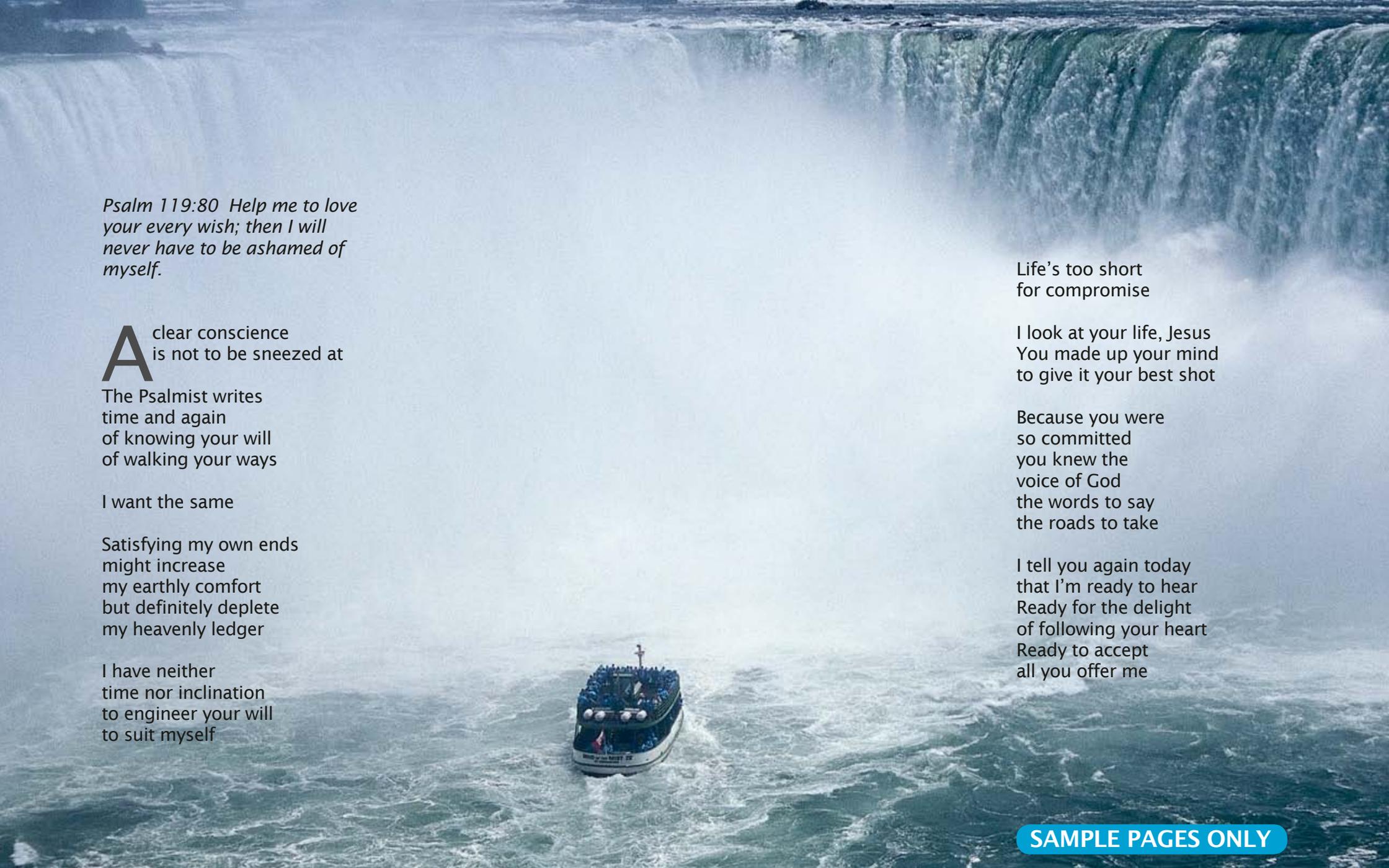
So why don't we show more?
Why does love get squashed out
by so many other things?

Fear, selfishness, pride
all come to mind
Surely direct opposites
to love's richness

Jesus, you said your people
would be known
by the way
they loved

Are we recognisable?



A large, powerful waterfall cascades down a rocky ledge, creating a thick mist. In the foreground, a blue and white boat with a cross on its roof is moving away from the viewer, leaving a white wake in the dark water.

*Psalm 119:80 Help me to love
your every wish; then I will
never have to be ashamed of
myself.*

A clear conscience
is not to be sneezed at

The Psalmist writes
time and again
of knowing your will
of walking your ways

I want the same

Satisfying my own ends
might increase
my earthly comfort
but definitely deplete
my heavenly ledger

I have neither
time nor inclination
to engineer your will
to suit myself

Life's too short
for compromise

I look at your life, Jesus
You made up your mind
to give it your best shot

Because you were
so committed
you knew the
voice of God
the words to say
the roads to take

I tell you again today
that I'm ready to hear
Ready for the delight
of following your heart
Ready to accept
all you offer me

Psalm 121:5-8

I t's no use busting my boiler
I want everything fixed up
all cut and dried last week
but it aint going to happen
so I may as well
sit back and
relax

You smile, and say
you've been
telling me that
for some time
but I've been
too busy
too frazzled
to hear it

I'm sorry, God
I'm trying to go
full-steam ahead
to use the gifts
you've given me

But you say there
are valuable lessons
you don't want me
to miss

I've told you before
and I'll say it again, God
you really are amazing

In a world with so much need
anyone would think
you'd be running ahead
urging me to keep up
instead of walking
beside or behind me
grabbing my flapping intentions
trying to slow me down

You smile again
I love it when
you do that, God

You do it when another
piece of your picture
has been wiped free of
the dust of misconceptions
and I see the real you
the God of grace
and amazing delight





Psalm 139

You know me inside out
every bone in my body
every thought in my head

You have to be pretty big
for this, God
pretty powerful
pretty wonderful

I think of all the people
at the airport
the other day
flying in
flying out
hundreds of them
thousands of them
and realise you know them
in exactly the same way

And the new phone book
that long list covering
our largest city

These aren't numbers
names and addresses
to you, God
each one's known totally
loved absolutely
just like me
I could go on
expanding the picture

Everyone in this country
in every country
since time began
and on to eternity

Now that's mind-blowing
in fact, my mind
can't get its act together
on this one at all

It's too way-out-there
too untouchable
right out of my league

Just as you could be, God
except you say
you're closer than my breath
nearer than my heartbeat

I have to listen to you
have to let these thoughts
cement themselves

Allow myself to accept
this amazing, amazing truth
of your amazing, amazing love