

**I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments.
(Psalm 119:131 ESV)**

**As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. (Psalm 42:1,2 ESV)**

Go out and run for a mile or so. What will be your body's reaction? As you run a distance, your mouth will be open and you will be panting—trying to gather as much air as possible for your screaming muscles whose aerobic energy system needs oxygen to continue to fuel them. Without the oxygen you cannot continue running.

Compare that to the poetic exercise of the psalmist. In Psalm 119 he opens his mouth and pants because he longs for God's commandments. In the well-known passage of Psalm 42 a comparison is made between the panting of a thirsty deer and the panting of the psalmist's soul for God.

In both psalms a fervent pursuit is obvious. There is heaving of the chest and laboured drawing of breath. Thirst begs for attention. Clearly the chase for God's Word is given substantial effort and energy. It's not a casual jog the psalmist is talking about. He *desperately* wants to possess God's commandments! He is running eagerly with great exertion so that his mouth is open and he is panting. He is trying to gather spiritual nourishment for a soul that craves God just as much as muscles crave energy to continue running. Is this how much you crave God?

—Jeff Russell

Exercise Physiology