

Faith and Depression

April 28, 2019

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Psalm 145:1-6

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship)

Read through Psalm 145:1-6 as a group.

Icebreaker

What was the last item you lost and what was your reaction?

Text for Discussion: Psalm 42

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Most of us know someone who's been affected by a form of mental illness. How should we support them when their world goes dark? People with depression know how broken and unfair life can be, and that it will take nothing less than the Resurrection to fix it. Psalm 42 is written from such a dark place, offering a means of discussing this is important, delicate topic with care and sensitivity.

The Tears of the Psalmist (v3): The Bible is about real life with real people who are in need of real rescue. Their problems are universal and timeless. Psalm 42's writer feels the depths of depression that are so common to so many of us. If we want to find healing and hope while mired in it, we need to admit that it's ok to be discouraged. Depression and sadness and anxiety are real parts of the Christian and human experience, and we need to make space for these struggles in our worship, community and friendships. And we must admit our pride and fear in confessing that our lives are not ok. It's a far greater witness to the world – and far more glorifying to God – to admit our need and brokenness than to portray a false sense of put-togetherness.

The Trust of the Psalmist (v8): Faith is necessary if we don't want to sink into despair. In our darker moments, faith may look like crying out to a God who seems absent. Though we might feel like this, God does not abandon us (Matt 12:20). There is no darkness that Jesus cannot overcome; our destiny and our hope are secure in Him. Because it is not the strength of our faith that saves us; it is the strength of the Faithful One.

For those experiencing depression:

Look outside yourself for Hope. We were not built to deal with this alone, and it's a massive step to admit when we need help. We need a community and a church where it's ok to struggle, responding in love when others open up to us. Medicine may also be required. God made the physical world, and we have physical bodies with physical needs – sleep, exercise, and at times, medicine. We should not shy away from or be embarrassed of this.

Talk to your soul rather than listen to your soul. Instead of listening to the chaotic voices that assault us in the midst of anxiety and depression, we need to remind ourselves of the Good News. The Cross and Resurrection are true even when we cannot feel it. God loves us even when we're unable to love ourselves. Our Father will never leave nor forsake us.

For those who have loved ones struggling with depression:

The Power of Presence. People naturally withdraw and isolate themselves when suffering, and we tend to withdraw from them. We feel under-equipped, not knowing what to say. Or we fear their pain will make us confront our own. But sufferers don't need our answers. They need us to show up and be present with them.

The Need for Compassion. Sometimes the most compassionate thing we can say is nothing. We hope to fix the problem or compare our pain to theirs... but what they need is our compassion. Jesus doesn't offer five easy steps out of depression; He promises to be with us and not forsake us. We too must grant sufferers the dignity of their process. We care by respecting this and quietly sitting beside them.

The Hope of the Resurrection. As Christians we are united to Jesus. Darkness – though it feels so real and present – is not the end of the story. It does not get the final say over our lives. There is a Resurrection and there will be a resurrection for everyone who places their frail, feeble trust in our faithful and true king Jesus.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How can Psalm 42 help a person anchor their distressed soul to the Lord, who is their Rock?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- Let your imagination “see” and “feel” what the Psalmist is describing in Psalm 42. Are there any words or phrases that you can identify with?
- ‘Soul’ is used 6x in Psalm 42. What do we learn about the soul in this passage?
 - How does your soul connect with God? What happens in your soul when you feel connected to God?
 - Is actual thirst ever fully quenched? What does this tell us about the soul's desire for God?
- In Psalm 42:5-6,11, what does the Psalmist do to cope with his distress?
 - What types of things do internal and external “voices of darkness” say to us?
 - What does it mean to “preach the gospel to yourself”?
 - What specific truth about Christ would you like to preach to yourself?
- How can Psalm 42 help a person anchor their distressed soul to the Lord, who is their Rock?
 - How do you react when you hear that someone you care about is suffering depression? What would you like to do differently?
 - What do you tend to do when you feel depressed or sad? What would you like to do differently?
 - What things does the Psalmist do that are expressions of his faith? What does he say about God?
- Discuss the do's and don't's mentioned in the sermon on what to do for a friend or loved one suffering depression.
- How does this Psalm comfort you?

Prayer

Pray Psalm 42 by personalizing the verses for you or someone you know suffering depression.

Experiment of the Month

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Practice lectio divina (sacred reading) by reading a favorite passage over attentively, then entering into prayer through a single word or phrase from the passage. Meditate on the word or phrase and make life applications.

Missional Experiment:

Depression, sadness, and anxiety are real parts of the Christian and human experience – and we need to make space for real struggle in our worship, in our community and in our friendships. The Bible invites us to admit that life is hard – it's not sin to be discouraged, it's not a failure of faith. It is a far greater witness to the watching world, far more glorifying to God to admit your need and brokenness than to portray a false sense of put-togetherness. Over the next month be intentional about being authentic as a witness to who Christ is, our ever-present, sympathizing, helping, and forgiving Savior. Share stories with your Community Group.