Harvester Christian Church

Life Groups | **PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY**

LIVING IN HOPE INSTEAD OF FEAR

Psalm 42

Life is hard and sometimes scary. We live in a world that, at times, seems pretty dark and unmerciful. In fact, this week marks the 15th anniversary of the September 11th attacks that rocked our country in 2001. It would be easy to give in to fear and despair.

We come, then, to instructions like these in I Thessalonians 5 - “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (vs 16-18). Notice the words “always”, “continually”, and “in all circumstances”. That command seems unimaginable, given the nature of life and the events unfolding in our world today.

This week we are exploring how it is possible to live in hope instead of fear. We will be studying Psalm 42 and looking for some practical steps to take to help us develop a more positive outlook on life when things get ugly.

**Please read Psalm 42 and then answer the questions below.**

Scholars suggest that Psalm 42 and 43 were originally one Psalm. Read Psalm 43. Does that seem likely? Why or why not?

How would you describe the mood of Psalm 42? What lines in the psalm lead you to that conclusion?

The writer mentions several reasons for his soul being downcast. What are they? Pay special attention to verses 3, 9, & 10.

The writer’s current state of mind is contrasted with memories of happier days. What pleasant memories does he recall in verse 4?

**Let’s look at how the psalmist coached himself through this tough time.**

1. **He spoke honestly to God about his feelings. (42:9; 43:2)**

Why is it pointless to lie to God about our true feelings? (See Psalm 139:1-4)

Psalm 22:1-2 contains language similar to Psalm 42. Who quoted these words and under what circumstances (see Matthew 27:46)?

Why do you think being honest about our true feelings is important, even in prayer?

1. **He directed his mind to remember (concentrate on) God. (42:6)**

In the following verses, what things were God’s people told to remember?

Deuteronomy 4:9

Deuteronomy 4:23

Psalm 103:2

What was the point of the remembering? Why do you think the psalmist determined to remember the Lord (His works, His love, His promises, etc.) in his time of darkness?

1. **He determined to praise God no matter what. (42:5,11)**

Read and summarize the following passages. Who is praising God and under what circumstances?

Acts 16:16-40

Job 1:6-22

If we only praise God when life is easy, what does that say about our relationship with Him?

What benefits might there be for us when we praise God in the midst of our fear and darkness?

**Weekly Challenge**

The Psalmist determined to praise God and put his hope in God even when he was in despair.

Set aside a few minutes each day this week to do nothing but praise God for who He is and thank Him for what He’s done in your life. If you keep a journal, write down a few things every day this week for which you are grateful. Write down some of God’s promises that keep your mind focused on the hope we have in Jesus. When fear or despair begins to creep back in, re-focus your mind on praising God and being thankful.

**Group Discussion**

What stood out to you from the Personal Bible Study or teaching?

When you’ve gone through dark times, what has been helpful in returning you to a place of hope/joy?

The psalmist’s memories of happier days included being with other believers at the temple. Please share a time when other believers helped restore your joy and hope.

Reminding one another of God’s promises can help us live in hope and joy. What are some promises of God that come to mind for you?

Many find that praising God when they are down is an uplifting exercise. Why do you think that is?

Was there anything else you wanted to discuss this week?