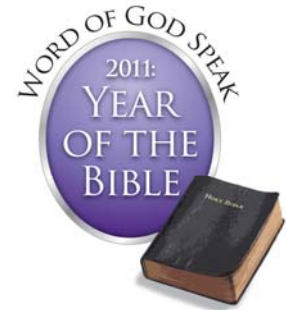


## Week 22: Psalms 9-17

### Study Guide for the week of May 30 – June 5, 2011



#### Personal reflection / journaling exercise

Spend some time this week reflecting on Psalm 13. This is an individual lament. What situations in your life does this psalm give expression to? This psalm is often shared with those who have recently experienced the death of a loved one. How does this individual lament give expression to grief? There are three parts (strophes) to this lament: Verses 1-2, 3-4, 5-6. Describe the thoughts and feelings expressed in each strophe. Give a descriptive heading (title) for each strophe. Describe the movement or change that you see from one strophe to the next. If you are now facing some trial in your life, which of the three strophes gives expression to what you are currently thinking and feeling? Why? Notice the dramatic change between Verse 1-4 and verses 5-6. Describe the change you see. Some Biblical scholars have speculated that, in ancient Israel, this psalm might have been used in public worship during a time of grief, like at a funeral service. The congregation or individual was giving expression to the grief while singing or speaking verses 1-4. At that point, the worship leader may have spoken or sung words of comfort that we don't have included in this psalm. The words might have been reminding the people grieving what the Lord has done in the past and what the Lord has promised for the future. After those grieving heard these comforting words, they then continued with verses 5-6. This would explain the dramatic change as you move from verse 4 to verse 5. What words do you need to hear from the Lord when you are in a time of trial or grief? How have you experienced God's faithfulness and care in the past? What promises from God do you cling to during times of trial or grief? As you recall how God has been faithful and God's promises for your future, can you imagine yourself someday expressing your faith in words like those found in verses 5-6?

**Discussion starters** *If you are leading a small group, may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.*

1. Ice Breaker Question: Read Psalm 11:1 Did you ever run away from home as a child? What happened that you decided to run? How far did you go? What brought you back? Have you ever wanted to run away as an adult...or actually attempted it? Explain. List all the truths that Psalm 16 teaches us about when we have feelings of wanting to run away.
2. Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. Psalm 9 This is the first of the thanksgiving psalms in our book of Psalms. These psalms describe a situation of distress and how God delivered the person. When have you experienced God delivering you from a situation of distress? Is there a portion of Psalm 9 that gives expression to what you experienced? Explain.
4. Psalm 10 What is this psalm expressing? Where do you see people seemingly getting away with doing evil? When you see this happening, how does it affect your faith?
5. Psalm 11:2-3 What do you think it means to be "upright in heart?" Have you had an experience where it seemed as though you were being shot at "from the shadows" (v.2)? Explain. Where do you perceive our "foundations are being destroyed?"
6. Psalm 12 What do you think is the connection between lies spoken with flattering lips and oppression of the weak? Explain what you think verse 6 claims about God's Word?
7. Psalm 14:1 For you, what is the most compelling evidence that God exists?
8. Psalm 17 Describe a situation in life where this psalm would offer hope and guidance. Have you ever been in that situation? Explain. How did you experience the help of God in that situation?

**Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 13:5-6**

## **Caring Time**

It is important to make time in your group to care for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end your time together praying for each other. One possibility this week would be for the group together to list the characteristics of a blameless person given in Psalm 15. Then have each person identify one of the characteristics in which he/she would like to grow. (See question below) After everyone has shared, break into pairs and have each person pray for the other in regards to growing in that characteristic. If you are a group of married couples, you could have spouses paired with each other for this prayer time.

**What is one characteristic from Psalm 15 for which you would like prayer to grow in that characteristic?**

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that being in a small group is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in small groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time. Make plans now with your small group to enjoy a summer event together. You could spend a summer night together having a campfire or have an afternoon picnic under the trees or by a river. Go to a concert in the park together. Take a canoe trip together. Go to a baseball game or county fair. If none of these work for your group, brainstorm other ways to experience and celebrate this summer together.