



Week 23: Psalms 18-27

Study Guide for the week of June 6-12, 2011

Personal reflection / journaling exercise

Spend some time this week reflecting on Psalm 27. This psalm seems written to give us confidence in the Lord. Describe the confidence that you gain from this psalm. What are the parts of the psalm that inspire the most confidence?

Notice how the psalm alternates between expressions of confidence in the Lord (verses 1-2, 5, 10); specific prayer requests (verses 4, 7, 9, 11-12); and how the psalmists plans to respond to the Lord's care and protection over us (verses 3, 6, 8, 13-14). Which prayer request gives voice to what you would ask of the Lord right now? Why? Of the responses to the Lord, which one expresses how you desire to respond to the Lord's care for you? Have you had experiences like that described in verse 2? What happened? Were you able to experience the Lord giving you strength to face that trial? How? Verse 14 is a word of encouragement for us. How are you at waiting for the Lord to act in your life? How does waiting for the Lord build faith? Overall, what are the feelings that arise in you when you contemplate this psalm?

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: Describe a time when you had to wait for something that you really wanted.
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 18:1 The writer of this psalm, David, was said to be "a man after God's own heart." (1 Samuel 13:4) You can see in this verse the intimate way David talks to God. Do you ever talk to God in this way? What would it be like for you to begin to speak to God in a more intimate, affectionate, and direct manner? What words would you use?
4. Psalm 18:30 What do you think this means, "the word of the Lord is flawless."?
5. Psalm 19:7-11 These verses extol the great value of God's Word. Pick the one statement about God's Word that speaks to you and explain how you have experienced God's Word in this way.
6. Psalm 21 How often do you pray for those in our government? What do you pray when you do? Is there a particular prayer for anyone in our government that you believe is especially needed at this time? As a group you may wish to take time to pray for those in our government.
7. Psalm 22a Verse 1 is what Jesus cried out from the cross. Find the other references to the crucifixion of Christ in this psalm. Notice how this psalm moves back and forth from words of lament to words of praise. From the times when you have suffered any kind of pain or turmoil, does this back and forth from lament to praise give true expression to those experiences? Explain.
8. Psalm 23 Share your experiences with learning and using Psalm 23. What is your favorite part of Psalm 23? Explain. What is counter-cultural about Ps 23:1? What does Madison Avenue attempt to do every day? How is that different from the truth in Ps 23:1? How do God's goodness and love pursue you? Psalm 23 is an invitation to live under God's rule and in solidarity with his people. What makes this invitation irresistible?
9. Psalm 24 According to verse 1, who owns everything? Let that truth sink in for a moment and then describe what that means for you. Because God reigns, who may enter his presence (24:4)? What might pure hands refer to? Pure hearts? Is it only outward actions that God expects (pure hands)? Is it only inner motivation that God expects (pure heart)? Some have called this an "entrance psalm" that provides questions and answers to teach the expectations God has of His worshipers. Can you imagine when this psalm was sung in the worship of ancient Israel? What do you imagine was the occasion?

10. Psalm 25:7-11 Is verse 7 a confessional prayer you have made or would like to make? As a sinner, explain how the Lord has instructed you in His ways? How do you experience the ways of the Lord as loving and faithful?
11. Psalm 27. This psalm seems written to give us confidence in the Lord. Describe the confidence that you gain from this psalm.

Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 27:1

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 to pray for any in the group that are going through a difficult time right now (a dark valley Ps. 23:4). Have each person answer this question:

Is there a “dark valley” you are currently going through? If so, describe it and how we can pray for you?

For each person who is experiencing a dark valley, pray for that person after he or she has shared. You might want to surround that person and lay hands on him/her as you pray.

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. If none of these work for your group, brainstorm other ways to experience and celebrate this summer together.