



Week 3

Psalm 42

The Big Idea: Revival happens when people begin to be led by the word of God and God takes over every area of their lives.

Pre-Group

STUDY: Psalm 42

Before interacting with this guide, all leaders and group members should study the referenced text using the HEAR Method.

H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.

Questions for Study and Reflection:

- 1.) Are there times in your spiritual walk where you experience dissatisfaction with your relationship with God? (There may not be anything wrong, but you just long for more of Jesus?)
- 2.) What does it mean to thirst for God?



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Major Themes:

1. The root of revival is a hunger and thirst for God.

Summary:

Psalm 42 is an intensely personal song describing the heart of a person who longs for God in the midst of feeling like God is distant from them. While it is hard to summarize a Psalm there are several distinctive factors that inform the reading of this passage.

First, take notice of how the writer longs for God. Evidently there is a life circumstance that is keeping the author from going to worship God in the temple. The temple was the place where the worship of God's name took place. The writer is distraught at his inability to worship God. He says that he longs and thirsts for God. The imagery used is of a deer that is about to perish from thirst. That is who we are as Christians. We walk in constant need of God's presence. Are you thirsty for God?

Second, notice how the writer talks to himself. He is depressed and downcast, but he refuses to give up pursuing God. Instead, he stops listening to himself and starts talking to himself. He straightens up and reminds himself that he has reason to hope. He has had God in the past. He will have God in the future. We need to learn from his example. In times where the way we feel is disconnected from the truth of God's word, we have to talk to ourselves and remind ourselves that we have reason to hope.

Group Time

Introduction

Revival comes when there is a group of people more hungry for God than anything else. They have to be desperate for God.

Opening question: Has there ever been a time when you were desperate to have God in your life?



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Understanding and Applying

Have someone read Psalm 42.

Psalm 42 paints a picture of what it looks like to hunger and thirst for God.

The imagery the Psalmist uses is meant to display a sense of urgency. The deer pants for water. It must have it to live. So our heart longs for God. We must have Him to make it through life.

The Psalmist is describing a characteristic that should describe every single Christian. We should always be hungry and thirsty to have more of God.

What are some of the reasons that Christians don't hunger and thirst for God when we should?

“If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.”

– John Piper

Very often, we don't hunger for God because we find ourselves getting full on the things of the World.



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Psalm 42 not only shows us what it looks like to hunger and thirst for God, it shows us what the refreshment we need looks like.

The Psalmist describes God as the refreshing water our soul needs. We cannot miss the implication here. Water is the very foundation of life for every living thing. The point is that just like we need water to live, Christians must have God to make it through life. God is what we must have.

Do you see God as the most important thing you need in life? Why or why not?

There is one final thing to notice from Psalm 42. The Psalmist is near despair between his desperation for God and what seems to be an incredibly tough time in life. The words of the Psalmist make us think that he isn't near depression when he writes, "Why are you downcast o' my soul?" However, he refuses to let how he feels drive him away from the God he longs for. He begins to tell himself to take "hope" in God. The psalmist begins to talk to himself instead of listening to himself.

Oftentimes, it's not a lack of knowledge that keeps us from experiencing God. More often than not, it's the disconnect between what we feel and what we know that keeps us from experiencing God. The Psalmist closed this gap by talking to himself and telling himself the truth.

How should we talk to ourselves to remind ourselves of the truth?



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Closing

Spend some time taking prayer requests from the group.

Afterward, pray together that God would give you a hunger to have more of Him.

Resources

Teacher's Bible Commentary

Longing for the Sanctuary of God (Psalms 42–43)

The passage.—Psalm 42 and Psalm 43 form one poem. In several Hebrew manuscripts they are joined together. The theme of the two psalms is the same, the psalmist's fervent desire to worship God at the Temple in Jerusalem. Three stanzas comprise the total poem, 42:1–5; 42:6–11; and 43:1–5. Each stanza ends in a refrain of virtually identical words.

Special points.—The psalmist was prevented from sharing in a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. His reaction was one of painful regret. In deep emotion he expressed his yearning for the house of the Lord.

References to “Jordan, Hermonites” (Hermon, RSV), and “Mizar” (42:6) indicate that the psalmist was at the headwaters of the Jordan River in the region of Mount Hermon. They suggest his remoteness from Jerusalem. The great distance that separated him from the sanctuary seemed to alienate his spirit from God.

Memories intensified the psalmist's disappointment. He recalled his former participation in such pilgrimages and festivals, a joyous privilege. He remembered “the house of God,” “the voice of joy and praise,” and “a multitude that kept holyday” (42:4).

Complaints against enemies and oppressors (42:9–10; 43:1–2) describe aggravated distress. These enemies construed the psalmist's plight, illness or exile or other calamity, as evidence of the indifference or powerlessness of his God. Their sneers were like a sword in his bones. This was their taunting question: “Where is thy God?” (42:10).

The basic source of the psalmist's grief was not absence from the Temple but a desolating sense of separation from God. His longing for personal fellowship with “the living God” (42:2) was like the searing thirst of a panting deer hotly pursued or overcome by thirst in a time of drought.

Changing moods are reflected vividly. The refrain at the end of each stanza is a self-exhortation to faith in the face of distress. The thunderous waterfalls fed by Hermon's snow and the swirl of Jordan's flooded



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tributaries seemed to illustrate the restlessness of the psalmist's thoughts and feelings. But God's loving kindness in the past was a quieting certainty for the future.

The final stanza displays a rising tide of confidence and joy. The circumstances of regret and perplexity were unchanged. But faith rebuked those circumstances. God's light and truth would lead the psalmist once again to the "holy hill ... unto the altar of God" (43:3–4). They would lead to inspiring worship at the Temple and to renewal of personal communion with God. This experience of the presence of God (the face of God, 42:2, RSV) would be the psalmist's "exceeding joy" (43:4).

Dilday, R. H., Jr., & Kennedy, J. H. (1972). [Psalms](#). In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The teacher's Bible commentary* (p. 310). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

The Bible Panorama

PSALM FORTY-TWO

V 1–4: **LONGING** The psalmist longs and thirsts for God like a thirsty deer which has run to the water brook. His mockers cast doubt on his God, but he remembers the joy and spirit of praise enjoyed when he worshipped God, with God's people, in the past. V 5–7: **LAMENT** He laments that his soul is cast down within him. For that reason, he will remember God, as waves and billows of sorrow pass over him. V 8: **LOVE** However, his confidence is that God's lovingkindness will support him during the day and that he will have a song in the night and a prayer to God. V 9–10: **LOGIC** It is logical for him to pass on to God his concern that his enemies are oppressing him and that he feels forgotten and forsaken. Surely God can help him as they question His very existence. V 11: **Lord** Despite the fact that he repeats again his downcast state to God, he realises that he must hope in God, and that help will come from God. He will praise God again. The last two words are 'my God'. In times of distress, it is good to remember our personal relationship with the Lord.

Chrispin, G. (2005). [The Bible Panorama: Enjoying the Whole Bible with a Chapter-by-Chapter Guide](#) (p. 240). Leominster, UK: Day One Publications.