

PSALMS ASSIGNMENT

NOTE: This assignment is designed to help study and process a Psalm to be used for a devotional or teaching/sermon.

- **Choose a Psalm OTHER THAN Psalm 13** (used as example below) **or Psalm 23** (so well known). Read and pray over these psalms.
- Identify what observation words are important for each psalm.
- You may then focus on each psalm as a whole, or choose a smaller passage of verses within each psalm to answer the next series of questions.
- Answer the following questions: (Use the attached “Psalm 13” as an example)
 - **What does the psalm SAY?** – factual observation
 - What descriptions are given?
 - What instructions, encouragement, etc. are given to readers of that time?
 - Is there any historical/purpose given in the psalm’s header which might have importance?
 - **What UNIVERSAL TRUTHS are present?** – theological insights
 - What do you learn about God?
 - What do you learn about Jesus?
 - What do you learn about the Spirit?
 - What do you learn about humankind?
 - **How does this APPLY TODAY?** – modern application
 - Identify “bridges” which link the text from back then to today.
 - What examples/analogies/examples can you apply from today to teach the point of what the psalm says & the universal truths in the psalm?
 - Why is this psalm important for today?
 - What other Bible verses support what this psalm says & how it applies for today?

© 2024 Global Outreach Foundation. All rights reserved.

Permission is granted to reproduce or download for personal and non-commercial educational and/or religious purposes. Any other use requires written permission.

- Take what you learned from above and create a written devotional/sermon for the psalm. Use the example of “Psalms 13” below as a guide for whichever you choose.
 - **Written devotional/sermon** – Write out word-for-word what you want to say (see the Psalm 13 manuscript). As you write, pretend you’re going to read it word-for-word over the radio, so write out the Bible verses you’re using, etc. In general, it should be at least 2 pages.
 - The sermon example below is longer than what you need to do for this assignment, but make sure to write enough to answer the 3 Questions: 1) What does the passage say? 2) What universal truths are there? 3) How does it apply to today?
 - You are encouraged to share this devotional/sermon! It is good for us to share with others what we are learning in Scripture.
-

Psalm 13
“How Long, O Lord?”

WHAT DOES IT SAY? The psalmist trusted God even when He was silent.

- I. Four times the psalmist posed the question, “How long?” (vs. 1-2)
 - a. The psalmist wondered if the Lord had forgotten him. (vs. 1)
 - b. The psalmist questioned how long God would hide His face. (vs. 1)
 - c. The psalmist wrestled with his own thoughts and had sorrow in his heart. (vs. 2)
 - d. The psalmist wondered how long his enemy would triumph over him. (vs. 2)
 - e. The psalmist’s use of the repeated phrase, “how long,” was to intensify the lament.
 - f. The repeated phrase, “How long...” did not ask the Lord for a specified length of time before He would respond, but instead asked the Lord to finally break what was and act on the psalmist’s behalf.

- II. The psalmist talked to God directly. (vs. 3-4)
 - a. The psalmist requested for God to look upon him and answer. (vs. 3)
 - b. The psalmist pleaded for light, or death would follow. (vs. 3)
 - c. The psalmist lamented that his enemies would overcome him and rejoice in his demise. (vs. 4)

- III. The psalmist declared his trust in the Lord. (vs. 5-6)
 - a. The psalmist declared trust in God's unfailing love. (vs. 5)
 - b. The psalmist's heart rejoiced in God's salvation. (vs. 5)
 - c. The psalmist sang to the Lord for His goodness to him. (vs. 6)

WHAT ARE THE UNIVERSAL TRUTHS? The Lord is worthy of trust and praise even when He seems silent.

- I. Sometimes God is silent in the face our troubles. (vs. 1-2)
- II. God hears our cries. (vs. 3-4)
- III. God is trustworthy and praiseworthy even in His silence. (vs. 5-6)

HOW DOES IT APPLY TODAY? You can trust the Lord even when He is silent to you.

- I. God may be silent in your troubles. (vs. 1-2)
 - a. David, a man after God's own heart, felt abandoned and rejected by God.
 - b. David's question is the same question you've had. "How long, O Lord?"
 - i. David asks this question four times, showing the intensity of his plea.
 - ii. The question is not really a question. David is really saying, "God, break the silence! Change things!"
 - c. You have experienced many of the emotions David describes: forgotten, abandoned, rejected, ignored, desperate, frustrated, and hopeless.
 - d. The world teaches us we're supposed to stuff those feelings down and put on a happy face.
 - i. David wrote them down and brought exposure to his feelings.
 - ii. There is no sin in feeling such emotions. Jesus felt them too and He was without sin.
 - 1. Jesus felt rejection. (John 1:10-11)
 - 2. Jesus felt betrayal. (John 13:21)
 - 3. Jesus felt abandoned. (Matt. 27:56)
 - 4. Jesus felt sorrow. (John 11:35, Heb. 5:7)
 - 5. Jesus felt frustrated. (Mark 9:19)
 - 6. There is no human emotion Jesus didn't experience. (Heb. 2:17)

- II. God's silence does not mean He is deaf. (vs. 3-4)
 - a. David knew that even if God's face was hidden from him, God's ears were still open.
 - i. Israel cried out to God from Egypt and God heard. (Ex. 6:5)
 - ii. Israel cried out for a deliver and God heard. (Judges 3:9)
 - b. You can also cry out to the Lord and He will hear you. (Matt. 11:28, 1 Peter 3:12)

- III. You can trust God and praise Him during His silence. (vs. 5-6)
 - a. David declared his trust in God while experiencing God's silence.
 - i. "But I trust" (vs. 5) is better translated: "But I am trusting..."
 - b. You can choose to trust in the Lord's unfailing love. (vs. 5)
 - i. The Lord's love is patient and steadfast. (Ps. 86:15)
 - ii. Israel's history demonstrates God's unfailing love toward them.
 - iii. God's love was demonstrated to us through Christ's death on the cross. (Rom. 5:8)
 - c. Remembering your salvation and the Lord's goodness leads to praise.
 - i. There is confidence gained in remembering our salvation. (Eph. 2:4-5)
 - ii. Remember things the Lord has done in your past.
 - iii. Remember what the Lord has promised for the future. (Rev. 21:4)
 - d. You might not experience immediate resolution to your problem, but you can be assured of His salvation and goodness. (vs. 6)
 - i. There is no evidence that God immediately answered David's situation, but David's heart moved from despair to trust and hope.
 - ii. Your situation may not immediately resolve, but God provides hope for you too.
 - 1. Be encouraged by Jerusalem's exiles. (Jer. 29:10-14)
 - a. Their situation was not immediately resolved. (Jer. 29:10)
 - b. God had a plan and it was not for their demise. (Jer. 29:11)
 - c. God would hear their prayers in their exile. (Jer. 29:12)
 - d. In their suffering, God could be found. (Jer. 29:13)

Psalm 13
"How Long, O Lord?"

I don't even know why I'm here with you today. I feel so far from God. I don't feel like I've heard His voice in ages. Why won't He speak to me?! Everything I do gets turned around and used against me. Everything I say falls to the ground. I'm pretty sure God is ignoring me. You're probably judging me right now, and you have every reason to. God has judged me. His silence is deafening. Why won't He answer me?! He used to speak to me clearly, but now? Nothing. I'm a child of God! I declare it every day, but still nothing. Something has to change. I can't take this. It's killing me. This is hell on earth.

What do you do when someone expresses the negative emotions inside them? What do you do when you're the one with the negative emotions? It makes sense that a good place to let those things out would be in the church, but often we're uncomfortable when someone starts to share things like this. Some of you were squirming in your seats and wondering what on earth was wrong with me! But some of you were feeling like at last someone was speaking what is inside your own heart.

I'm going to be perfectly honest with you. I'm an optimist and it's hard for me to hear someone going on and on about their negative feelings, negative world, negative life. I can empathize because I've had feelings like that from time to time, but I just don't dwell there. I easily turn to looking at the silver lining and move on. But you know what I'm learning? Sometimes I'm just not being totally honest with myself when I do go through troubles. Often I push down those feelings, put on a happy face, and go on with life only to take out my frustrations and sorrow on people who don't deserve it and didn't even see it coming. I don't think I'm alone in this. Our state of West Virginia has the highest

drug overdose rate in the nation, more than double the national average! Statistically, one West Virginian will take their own life today. Another one will do it tomorrow, and another one each day after that. This isn't just happening to non-Christians. This is happening in the church as well. We as the church, the body of Christ, HAVE to do a better job dealing with emotions and real life because real life is not always clean. Real life is not always happy. Real life is messy and hard. Real life can be discouraging.

David, a man after God's own heart, and author of numerous Psalms lays out such beautiful examples for us of how to express our internal emotions and give them the light of day. Today we'll focus on Psalm 13, a very short psalm, but one packed with much for us to think about. [Read Psalm 13]

Here we see in the first couple verses that David feels forgotten, abandoned, rejected, troubled in his thoughts, desperate, frustrated, and hopeless. That's a lot of emotion in two verses! Four times he poses the question, "How long?" You can feel the urgency and desperation in his words. "How long, O Lord? How long must I endure this? How long will You look away from me? HOW LONG?!" But David's question isn't really a question. It's a demand. It's a demand of, "God! Do something! Make it stop!" Haven't you felt like that before? Hasn't life just beat you down to the point where you think God has turned His eyes from you, has abandoned you, and you're left to yourself to figure it all out – all while the world looks at you and laughs? All you want is for God to do something, to make things change, so then you'll be able to breathe and praise Him again.

The world teaches us that we're supposed to keep those things inside, stuff them down deep, and put on a mask that shows the world everything is perfect. You post on Facebook about your

© 2024 Global Outreach Foundation. All rights reserved.

Permission is granted to reproduce or download for personal and non-commercial educational and/or religious purposes. Any other use requires written permission.

smiling, happy life while your mind is consumed with your real world. David didn't hide his feelings. He wrote them out for us to see. He even exposed his heart's cry to God, "How long, O Lord?" No matter what you've been taught by the world or the church, you are not sinning when you feel strong negative emotions. God created you with emotions! God feels emotion and Jesus experienced them too, yet He was without sin. The book of Hebrews tells us there is not a human emotion that Jesus didn't experience. This means Jesus experienced the negative emotions too. He felt the betrayal of Judas, the rejection of mankind, sorrow when Lazarus died, frustration at the lack of faith in Israel, and absence of His Father during His crucifixion, crying out, "My God, my God, why have You abandoned me?" (Matt. 27:46) I have news for you. David penned those words and Jesus spoke them from the cross! Jesus legitimized David's feelings, adopted them to describe His own, and spoke them in front of a crowd. It's OK to feel these things and say them out loud.

But even when we feel alone, when God is silent, it does not mean He is deaf. Were that true, verses 3-4 of this Psalm would not exist. David cried out to God, begging Him to look at Him. David believed the Old Testament declaration that God hid His face from His people for evil they had done, therefore David thought that God must have turned His face from him and now he's begging God to look back at him once again, to have mercy on him. But why would David even consider crying out to God unless God could still hear him? Because David also knew that in Exodus Israel cried out to God from Egypt and God heard. In the book of Judges, Israel endured God's punishment but they called out for deliverers and God heard. So David cries out to God from his distress. You can cry out too. The Lord will hear you! 1 Peter 3:12 says, "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are inclined to their prayer." If you have accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have been made

© 2024 Global Outreach Foundation. All rights reserved.

Permission is granted to reproduce or download for personal and non-commercial educational and/or religious purposes. Any other use requires written permission.

righteous, which means His eyes are on you and His ears are listening. Jesus said in Matthew, “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28) The Lord is not condemning you; He is listening and beckoning you. From our depth of emotion, you can cry out to Him and know that He will hear you. He is not deaf to your cries.

In the final two verses of this Psalm, David declares trust in God’s unfailing love. Notice that God hasn’t responded yet to David’s cry for help. From the middle of God’s silence, in the depth of David’s emotion, David says, “But I trust...” Probably a better translation is, “but I am trusting.” Like David, you can make a choice to trust in the Lord’s unfailing love. Psalm 86:15 describes God’s love as patient and steadfast. Israel’s rollercoaster ride of obedience and disobedience demonstrates God’s unfailing love toward them, rescuing them from themselves and their enemies time and time again. God’s love was demonstrated for all time through Christ’s death on the cross. “For God so loved the world...” (John 3:16) The world includes you, so you can trust in that love.

As David chose to trust in God’s love – even in the midst of God’s silence – David’s heart began to rejoice and he sang because of the Lord’s goodness toward him. There is a hope that comes when you remember your salvation. Ephesians 2 speaks of what we were while in the pit of our sin, but that God’s love and mercy was heaped upon us and we are brought near to God. We once were spiritually dead, but now we are alive. Remember times the Lord has moved in your past, ways that He protected you or guided you. Ask Him to do it again! Remember what the Lord has promised for the future. Rev. 21:4 says, “And He will wipe every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” Oh that we could reach this future reality now! It makes me go full circle back to verse one of our psalm, “How

long, O Lord?” But by remembering your own salvation, the times the Lord has moved in your life, and what the future promise holds, it gives you some reasons to thank God in the here and now, even if God is currently silent.

Psalm 13 is six verses long. David spends 2 verses emoting, 2 verses begging God, and 2 verses praising. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our lives could be so neatly, and our troubles so shortly, arranged? I want to bring your attention to something here. Though the psalm ends on a more positive note than it started, there is no evidence that David's hardship went away. There is no verse that says, "And God said..." or "Suddenly David's enemies left." David's cries of "How long" might not be over just yet. What has changed is that David has moved to a place of trust, of hope, of remembering God's goodness. God hasn't broken the silence; David's circumstances are the same, but he has chosen to trust God in the midst of the silence and circumstance.

Your situation may not immediately change either. But you can move from despair to hope because God is not far from you and He is not deaf to your cries. There was a time in Israel's history when they were exiled from Jerusalem and carried off to Babylon. They were incredibly discouraged and waiting for God to deliver them and keep all His promises. But God had a bit of a surprise for them. Through the prophet Jeremiah, He told them that they weren't going to be leaving Babylon anytime soon, so they should settle in and carry on with life. Their situation would not change for seventy years, but God did not leave them without hope. He spoke to them, what to us is a very familiar passage, Jeremiah 29:11-13: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all

your heart.” Your situation may not change for a while, but the same hope God spoke to the exiles in Babylon is the same hope He extends to you in your situation. He has a plan for you and it is not to destroy you. You have a future. You can call on Him and He will hear you. You can seek Him and find Him.

How long, O Lord? God may be silent to you right now, but He is listening. Your situation might not immediately end, but you can still have hope in the midst of it. You CAN trust God and praise Him from your depth of hurt and wondering. David shows us that. It’s time to be real with yourself, with those around you, and with God. Quit hiding. Shed light on your emotions and your circumstance, cry out to God for His mercy, and choose to trust in His love and goodness toward you in the situation you’re in right now.

Let us pray.