

Week of March 4, 2012
I Long for You, Lord

Passage Outline

1. **Thirsting for God** (Ps. 42:1-5)
2. **Despairing for God** (Ps. 42:6-11)
3. **Confidence in God** (Ps. 43:1-5)

What This Lesson Is About:

This lesson is about worship as an expression of our desire to be in God's presence.

How This Lesson Can Impact Your Life:

This lesson can help you recognize that God made you to know Him and worship Him, and to enter worship with the anticipation of meeting Him.

1. Thirsting for God - Psalm 42:1-6a

Psalm 42:1-6a

¹As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? ³My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" ⁴These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. ⁵Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and ⁶my God.

- A. What a beautiful analogy of a deer longing for streams of water to describe our heart-felt longing for God.
- B. The implication is that both the deer and the worshiper were somehow prevented from fulfilling their desire.
- C. The psalmist asked "When can I come and appear before God?" It seems to indicate he was prevented access to the Jerusalem temple. The phrase *appear before God* carried a liturgical meaning of corporate worship with other Israelites in Jerusalem.
- D. The psalmist expressed his unfulfilled desire to worship by declaring, I thirst for God. The verb thirst evokes the image of a person whose throat is parched by a dry desert heat, seeking water and finding none.
- E. Evidently from verse 3, the psalmist found himself in difficult straits, cutoff from Jerusalem's temple and from the opportunity to worship God with his fellow Hebrews. Instead, he found himself surrounded by people who doubted the existence of the true God.
- F. The psalmist longed for that special presence of God experienced in the midst of the throng of believers who worshiped in Jerusalem.
- G. The psalmist loved the Lord and deeply desired (to pour out one's heart) to worship Him with other believers. But at last, the psalmist is disappointed because this has not happened.
- H. The psalmist questioned his own depression and turmoil and exhorted himself and thus his readers to put their hope in God. He reassured himself he would still praise Him.
- I. He used his hope that once again he would be able to worship God with fellow believers as an effort to keep his depression in check.

How Important is Corporate Worship in Your Spiritual Walk with God?

Do you have a yearning to worship God with other believers? Is that yearning strong enough to compel you to make time for worship, and to put forth the effort to join your Brothers and Sisters in Christ no matter what? Worship will enrich our lives and draw us closer to the God we love. But the focus and center of worship is **NOT** what it does for us, but how God is praised and glorified by our worship.

Ask yourself this week, “Why do I attend worship on Saturday/Sunday? Is my focus in worship on “what I will receive?” or is it on “what I will give God?”

2. Despairing for God - Psalm 42:6-11

Psalm 42:6b-11

⁶My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon--from Mount Mizar. ⁷Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. ⁸By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me-- a prayer to the God of my life. ⁹I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" ¹⁰My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?" ¹¹Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

- A. The psalmist was disconnected from fellow Hebrews in shared worship. He bluntly states, I am deeply depressed and cries out to God.
- B. Mount Hermon, at some 9100 feet, is the highest mountain in the region and it has three peaks. Mount Mizar is believed to be one of the many smaller mountains that hug the eastern slopes of Mount Hermon.
- C. The region is only about 125 miles from Jerusalem, but it might as well have been a million miles given the writer's deep desire to worship God in Jerusalem.
- D. Both Psalms 42 and 43 are part of Individual Laments. The psalmist is lamenting the fact that he cannot worship God in Jerusalem.
- E. The Mount Hermon range has several roaring waterfalls. We can easily imagine the psalmist writing this lament as he watched the waters spill over the mountain's cliff and tumble thunderously into a deep pool below.
- F. The breakers and billows of the tumultuous water symbolized his own churning heartache, his unfulfilled longing for God.
- G. In the midst of his great despair the psalmist found hope. The LORD will send His faithful love. This word is one of the most important words in the Hebrew Scriptures. In his total despair of ever seeing Jerusalem and worshipping God there, the psalmist could still rely on God's faithful love, a love tied directly to God's promise and His dependability.
- H. The psalmist asks “Why have You forgotten me?” Often people in dire circumstances feel abandoned by God.
- I. His abandonment was heightened by the enemy's taunt, “Where is your God?”
- J. The psalmist questions himself: “Why am I so downcast? Why so disturbed?” Particularly, since I can still hope in God. This questioning is followed by an admonition to “put your hope in God.” The idea of

putting one's hope in God literally would be to wait for God, indicating an expectant hope He soon would reverse one's predicament.

How do you Handle Desperate Situations?

We all have at times been able to identify with the psalmist's despair and like him, we can also find assurance in God's faithful love. We lose the "joy of our salvation" and must come again into God's presence in worship and sing, pray, and beseech God to "restore to us the joy of our salvation."

This week, write out Verse 11 on a 3 X 5 card and carry it with you wherever you go. Pull it out during those desperate situations at work, school or in just life and quietly lift that prayer to God, thanking Him for His comfort and hope in the midst of your despair.

3. Confidence in God - Psalm 43:1-5

Psalm 43:1-5

¹ Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; rescue me from deceitful and wicked men. ² You are God my stronghold. Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy? ³ Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. ⁴ Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. ⁵ Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

- A. Psalms 42 and 43 are joined in many older Hebrew manuscripts. These facts probably indicate the two psalms originally formed one hymn. Therefore Psalm 43 is treated as the concluding stanza of the hymn that began in 42:1.
- B. The psalmist wants God to vindicate him. The word *vindicate* means to declare just or to be found in the right. The psalmist asked God to contend his case as if in a court of law.
- C. Again, the psalmist questioned God about His apparent abandonment. Previously, he asked "why God had *forgotten* him," but here he asks "why God had *rejected* him?" The question evokes every human emotion of loneliness, despair, and bewilderment.
- D. After all, the psalmist thought of God as his refuge, a word meaning safe place.
- E. Day in and day out, the psalmist poured out his heart to God, expressing his strong longing to be in His presence. Nightly his pillow was soaked with tears as he lamented not being able to worship with other believers.
- F. God's light and truth are the only trustworthy compass we have to navigate through the storms of life.
- G. The psalmist believed God's light and truth would lead him and bring him to God's holy mountain, a reference to the temple mount in Jerusalem.
- H. This was God's dwelling place, reflects how most Jews associated the Jerusalem temple with the very house of God, the place of His abode.
- I. While God is omnipresent, we sensed His presence in a strongly personal way as we worshiped together. That why when we find ourselves in dire circumstances, we too can ask for God's light and truth to lead us into His personal presence of worship.

- J. The psalmist was confident that God would rescue him and so he used the word *God* four times in verse 4, revealing his heart's greatest longing.
- i. To come to the altar of God, a reference to the point where the worshiper's sins were covered by the blood of the sacrificial animal.
 - ii. The psalmist promised to praise God with a harp (literally lyre), a stringed instrument of worship.

How has God's Presence been "Light" and "Truth" for you?

Read John 8:12 and John 14:6. Think of a specific time in your personal or family life when the reality of Jesus' presence as "light" and "truth" helped you navigate through a stormy situation. On a separate sheet of paper, describe that situation.

How has it been true in your life, that if God "brings you to it" that He can also "bring you through it?" Share that personal life experience with someone else who may be going through something very similar.

Biblical Truths in Focus

1. Genuine worship is preceded by a genuine desire to encounter God.
2. Worshiping with believers enriches our experience of God and strengthens our faith in Him.
3. Christians experience harsh circumstances in life just as any other person, but the reality of God's presence through the storms of life will bring comfort and hope.
4. Corporate worship is an important way God brings healing to life's hurts.