

Question Everything // Part 3

Psalm 88

Read the Scripture reference above and then read the introduction below to help guide your personal study.

The sermon this weekend was titled, “Will life ever get better?” If we were really honest and moved away from the ‘I’m more spiritual than you and that’s why I have this bumper sticker on my car’ quotes, we would be able to look at each other and acknowledge that life can be really hard. To make matters worse, most of the folks around us in church look like they have it all together. From the peanut gallery where we sit gazing into their lives, it seems that even when life’s tsunamis crash onto their shore, they appear to just walk on the water. It makes us want to hide the hurt and pain in our own lives and pretend that we have it all together, as well. The Psalms offer honey for the heart as we see anger, distress and despair. It sometimes astounds me, but God actually put these feelings into the Bible. In Psalm 88 we see:

Vs.3- I am overwhelmed by troubles and my life draws near.

Vs.4- I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like one without strength.

Vs. I am set apart within the dead, like the slain one who lies in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care.

Vs.6- You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths.

Vs. 7- Your wrath lies heavily on me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves.

Vs.- 8- You have taken me from my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape;

Vs. 9- My eyes are dim with grief. I call to you Lord every day; I spread out my hands to you.

Vs. 14- Why do you reject me and hide your face from me?

Vs. 15- From my youth I have suffered and been close to death; I have born your terrors and am in despair.

The Psalmist is pulling no punches. This is no ‘Alexander and the terrible horrible no good very bad day.’ Life is hard and has been for a while. There is no happily ever after that we can see; no pretty bow to tie up the package. It’s more like shreds of life on the floor. We could read this and push quickly past it hoping to land on a more “hope giving” passage. Instead, let the Psalms help you confront your darkest hour, knowing that God has walked with his people in hours just like this for generations. God is not afraid of my anger. Honest conversation with God (like in Psalm 88) actually has the potential to draw us into a deeper intimacy with our Heavenly Father.

Work through these questions before you come to small group and be ready to interact with the Scriptures and questions below.

Small Group Discussion Questions

I. What points from the sermon were helpful to you?

2. Read Psalm 88. List out the various words that the Psalmist uses that indicate sadness or trouble. List out in another column the hopeful words and phrases that you see.

3. Examine: What are some reasons that God put passages like Psalm 88 in the Bible?

4. Have you ever felt like the writer of Psalm 88 (lonely, betrayed, chronic pain, helpless, feeling like God has placed you in a pit and forgotten about you?) What helped you through those moments?

5. Most (probably all) of the writers of Scripture have experienced deep pain and struggle. Have different people in your group read the following passages: James 1:2-8, 1 Peter 1:3-9, and Thessalonians 5:16-19. What wisdom do these different writers have for someone going through dark struggles?

6. Apply: How we can we make our group a place of support and safety for those going through similar struggles?

7. Pray: Take this opportunity to share some struggles and disappointments that are in your life now. Perhaps they are more long-term and in the backdrop of your life, but they still weigh on you. Perhaps they are the central focus of your daily life. Bring some of these before your group and pray for each other in them. Also, thank God that he has cared for his people in these moments in past generations, and that we have some of their accounts to know that he has proven faithful.