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HALLEL PSALMS

Singing with Jesus at the Last Supper

STUDY GUIDE

A Toast to our Father

Psalm 116

WELCOME & SHARING

Share any announcements, upcoming plans for your group, etc...

- **Arun 5K** - April 18. The Aruna Project works to free women for sexual slavery. There are two ways for you to get involved:
 - Sign up to run the 5K and raise some money for Aruna. Check the post on The City to learn more (<http://newcity.onthecity.org/groups/83659/events/4169256>).
 - If you're not a runner but would like to help as a course monitor, or help with registration or refreshments, note this in the comments section on The City post, or contact Mike Previtera directly (mmprevitera@gmail.com).
- **New City Guys** - We're gathering for March Madness on Thursday March 19 (noon - whenever) @ Sorrento's in Norwood.

Opening Exercise: Now is a good time in the year to have folks share a little more deeply about themselves. Consider opening your time over the next few months by doing one of the following:

- Hot Seat: Take the first 10 minutes of each cGroup meeting and have one person be on the “hot seat.” Others in the group can ask them whatever kinds of questions they want for 10 minutes (appropriate questions only). The goal is to get to know the people in your group in a deeper way. Next week, a different person in your group is on the hot seat until everyone goes.
- Tell your story: Have folks give a short version of their story (aim for 5-7 minutes). Ask them to frame it around the 5 H’s: 1.) heritage [family, where you came from, etc] 2.) highlights, 3.) hard times, 4.) hand of God moments [times when you really saw God move], and 5.) heroes.

Intro: During LENT (the run up to Good Friday and Easter), we are looking at the Hallel Psalms (Psalm 113-118). These psalms are used as a part of the Passover celebration, so these would be the songs and prayers Jesus and his friends would have used at the Last Supper.

STUDY/DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 116 is a hymn of personal thanksgiving for God’s care. Do you find it easy to give thanks? Why or why not?

>>Read Psalm 116

2. What kind of situation does the psalmist find himself in?
3. The writer appears to be at his worst in verses 10-11. Have you ever been in a spot like that? What was going on?
4. What do we learn about God from this song? Brainstorm together. Is there anything about God that you feel like you need especially to hold onto right now?
5. On Sunday Josh said that there are some things you can only learn during suffering. Do you think this is true? Why or why not? Has God ever used suffering in your life?
6. How does Psalm 116 help prepare us to do life in community?
7. How does Psalm 116 help prepare us for mission?

PRAYER

Close your time by breaking up into men and women. Pray briefly for each other.

Leader's Guide

1.) Various answers. You might frame it more broadly. Does our culture have a hard time giving thanks? Why or why not? OR, have we made a virtue of being cynical? If so, why do you think that is?

2.) We don't know what the psalmist is going through, but whatever it is, it's bad. Verses 3, 6, 8 and 10 may suggest a serious illness. Sheol is the grave, so he feared for his life. 2 Kings 20 tells the story of King Hezekiah, who was gravely ill but later was healed. He went to the temple to give thanks and some scholars wonder if these are the words he used.

Side note: The Book of Common Prayer uses this psalm in its service of thanksgiving for childbirth. Remember that hundreds of years ago, safety for mom and children were far from a given.

3.) Verse 10 sounds like the words of despair. In verse 11 he feels like all his friends have let him down and/or turned on him.

In Mark 9:24 a man struggles to believe Jesus can heal his child. "I believe; help my unbelief" is his prayer. It's a good prayer for us too. It's also important to remember that Jesus suffered. He suffered physically, but he also was betrayed and let down by his friends. Christians have the only God who, when we pray in pain, can say, "I know exactly how you feel."

4.) Verses 1-4 remind us that we have a God who listens to the cries of his people. This prompts the psalmist to call on God all the more. It ought to do that same for us.

Verses 8-11 remind us that we have a God who acts in history. That is, he is not disconnected. He is involved with his people. He responds to prayer. See also James 5:16, Ephesians 3:30, Luke 18:7.

Verses 5-7 remind us of God's character: he is gracious, righteous and merciful. This is good news indeed. Either in this life or in the next, all God's people will be able to say sincerely, "He has dealt bountifully with me."

5.) There might be various perspectives on this. One key thought: suffering never leaves you the same. You can be burned up like a cinder, or refined like gold. But you will never remain the same after a period of suffering.

One possible idea to explore is that the psalmist already knew about God's grace and mercy beforehand. He had worshipped in the temple, he knew Exodus 34 where God is described as righteous and gracious and merciful. But here he experienced these parts of God's character. His experience led him to know these things about God in a different way. Sometimes you don't know Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have.

6.) There is an intensely personal psalm. And yet by the time we get to verses 18-19 the psalmist is yearning for corporate worship. This should tell us something. God can move in our lives individually, but this always pushes us toward life and worship in community. Our experiences will benefit others, and vice versa.

7.) This is a kind of testimony. He is sharing how God has saved him. We too should be quick to share of God's goodness in our lives. The more comfortable we are doing this, the more authentic we are with our friends, and the more opportunities we will have to share the gospel.

Our aim shouldn't be to be pushy: just to be authentic. If Jesus is important to us, and if we believe he works in our life, we should aim to be transparent with our friends and neighbors, even (especially!) those who don't know Jesus.