

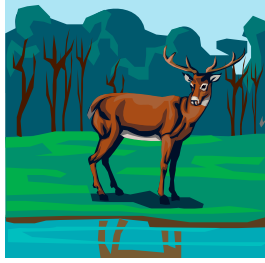


Psalm 42

Inductive Discovery Lesson 4

"If God is all-knowing, almighty, and everywhere present at once, then why does He seem to be missing-in-action when I need Him the most?" How many of us have asked ourselves that question at one time or another, perhaps even more than once? The composer of Psalm 42 was facing tremendous persecution from his outward enemies and discouragement and depression from his inward feelings and emotions. He seemed to be moving further away from God, which led him to write about his desperate need for Him. Working through a process of self-examination, he was prompted to choose praise over doubt, with the result being he was able to encourage his soul and renew his hope in God.

Perhaps you're facing a similar situation today, wondering where in the world God is while looking for a way out. Be careful—the enemy of your soul will try to offer you a tempting alternative detour that is perhaps an all too familiar road. When you see it, don't take it! The detour may seem shorter and easier, offering you temporary relief, but it can actually be more hazardous and dangerous than the path the Lord has marked out for you. When you follow after God, you have His promise that "a man's heart plans his way but the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). Keep your eyes focused upward and stay alert; God's way is safer than any familiar road you have traveled in the past. His path is marked with exclamation points (the principles and promises of scripture), not question marks!



Psalm 42

Yearning for God in the Midst of Distress

A Contemplation of the sons of Korah

- 1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God.
- 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?
- 3 My tears have been my food day and night,
While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"
- 4 These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me.
For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.
- 5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.
- 6 O my God, my soul is in despair within me;
Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan
And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.
- 7 Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls;
All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.
- 8 The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;
And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life.
- 9 I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"
- 10 As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, While they say to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"
- 11 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

OBSERVE

"Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law." – Psalm 119:18

The basic thing to remember about observing a psalm is that it is poetry—and poets think in images. Whatever type of psalm it may be (praise or lament, meditation or petition, just to name a few) the psalmist uses familiar images to turn his experience into a picture. He uses figurative language to reflect on God’s character and express the stirrings of his own soul.

Start by reading the entire psalm through a few times. You might try reading it aloud, or have someone else read it while you listen intently.

Some things to look for: Does the psalmist compare or contrast one thing to another? Does he repeat a specific word or phrase to emphasize a theme? The psalmist may use hyperbole (an exaggeration for the sake of effect, not meant to be taken literally). What experience does he describe? What emotions does he express? What characteristics of God does he mention? Does he make a vow or a declaration? Use the **first column** to describe what the psalmist says. Use the **second column** to jot down your own notes, thoughts, impressions or questions.

Write the definition of words listed in each section. Use a regular dictionary or an Old Testament Word Study dictionary if you have one.

Psalm 42:1-5

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

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disturbed (v.5) _____

hope (v. 5) _____

By his description, how was the psalmist’s trouble affecting him physically and emotionally?

What counsel does he give himself? _____

Psalm 42:6-8

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

remember (v. 6) _____

lovingkindness (v.8) _____

 *Did you know . . .*

For the Old Testament believer, Jerusalem was the center of worship. The psalmist mentions remembering God “from the land of the Jordan and the peaks of Herman.” So when he wrote this song, he was far away from Jerusalem, unable to participate in the worship community he remembered so well. He missed being able to join in with fellow believers; and his isolation left him vulnerable to taunts of “where is your God?”

Psalm 42:9-11

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

mourning (v. 9) _____

praise (v.11) _____



CONSIDER

According to Psalm 42 . . .

What is the cure for a troubled soul? _____

What reasons does a believer have to pray and praise God, even in difficult times? _____

INTERPRET and APPLY

“The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”
– Psalm 119:130

Look for a spiritual lesson. The imaginative language of the Psalms helps us to understand that God’s Word provides guidance for our feelings as well as our faith. As you look for spiritual lessons, keep in mind that this collection of prayers and songs teaches us how to worship God—not just with our lips but with our lives. While the Psalms address all aspects of life and human experience, ultimately they point us back to our Creator.

Ask: What is the theme of this psalm? How does the psalmist express himself to God? What does this psalm reveal about God’s character or His relationship with His people? Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid? **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**

***“I pondered the direction of my life and turned to follow Your statutes.
I will hurry, without lingering, to obey Your commands.”***
– Psalm 119:59-60 NLT

We don’t read the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to obey what we have learned. Ask yourself: What can I learn from the psalmist’s experience? How does this help to line up my feelings with my faith? Does it provide comfort? Does it provide correction? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Psalm 42:1-5

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

?

Psalm 42:6-8

Lesson: _____

Application: _____
_____?

Psalm 42:9-11

Lesson: _____

Application: _____
_____?

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the psalm is about. _____

Give your own title to the psalm to help you remember what it says.

Up close and personal

**The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;
And His song will be with me in the night,
a prayer to the God of my life.
Psalm 42:8**

Memorize God’s Word

Choose the translation you prefer to memorize the verse in and re-write it here.

Meditate on God’s Word

As you memorize this verse, let it work into your heart and mind. Scripture meditation is like a good cup of tea: the longer it steeps, the richer the flavor. So give yourself permission to slowly savor God’s Word! Use the questions below (like a tea bag) to keep dipping into this verse. Challenge alert: You won’t always see an obvious answer directly from the verse. Just *think and pray* about it and share what the Lord brings to your heart and mind.

Look up. What does this verse teach you about God? (For example, look for signs of His character, His attributes, His works, His promises.)

Look around. What does this verse teach you about the world and people in general?

Look within. What does this verse teach you about yourself?

Look ahead. Does this verse give you reason to hope? Briefly share your thoughts.

Look alive! Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth found in this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

Make God's Word Your Prayer

As you memorize and meditate on this verse, pray it back to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit examine your heart, increase your understanding, and help you to pray. Ask Him for faith and strength to *act* on the truth of God's Word.



A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path

What has been the most important lesson, for you personally, as you studied this psalm? How will you begin today to put what you are learning into practice?
