

FLOURISHING IN GRAD SCHOOL
WEEK 8: MADE FOR COMMUNITY

*"...God never makes private, secret salvation deals with people.
His relationships with us are personal, true: intimate yes; but private, no."
- Eugene Peterson*

Psalm 133

A song of ascents. Of David.

1 How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!

2 It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe.

3 It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.

Have someone read the passage out loud. Give everyone five or so minutes on their own to review it. Invite study members to note things that stand out and add a comment or question about it on their sheet.

Discussion Questions

Background: Psalm 133 is part of a collection known as the Psalms of Ascent. It is likely these were sung as the Hebrew people made their way to Jerusalem for the various festivals each year. For some this journey would be long, arduous, and potentially dangerous. The travelers sang these songs together reminding one another of who God was, who they were, and what they believed to be true about God and his ways.

In your own words, what does David declare in verse 1?

What is unity? What does it mean to be unified? What is it that unifies this group of people?

What is "good and pleasant" about unity?

David uses two images to describe how good and pleasant this is? What are they? Though these images are not modern ones, what are they pictures of and why might they be used?

What are some of the other images the Bible uses to describe the people of God? (Some ideas: Psalm 100:3, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 1 Thessalonians 4: 9-10) How do these add to our understanding of what it means to be part of God's people?

Someone has said that the call of God to the Church is to be unified, not uniform. What do you think is meant by this? How easy or hard is this? How is the Church doing these days?

What has been your experience in Christian community? Have there been things that are life-giving? What has been challenging or even hurtful?

The quote from Eugene Peterson at the beginning is from his book *Long Obedience in the Same Direction* which is his own study/commentary on the Psalms of Ascent. He goes on to say the following:

So the question is not, "Am I going to be a part of a community of faith?" but, "How am I going to live in this community of faith?"...The Bible knows nothing of a religion that is defined by what a person does inwardly in the privacy of thought or feeling, or apart from others on a lonely retreat. When Jesus was asked what the great commandment was, he said, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all our soul, and with all your mind, " and then immediately, before anyone could go off and make a private religion out of it, riveted it to another: "A second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:34-40)."

How do you respond to this? Particularly those of you from the United States where a rugged individualism is in the air we breathe?

How does Psalm 133 end? What is the fruit of unity in the life of God's people?

Spend a few minutes filling in the table below. Discuss these final questions together and then pray for one another and for this group. How can we grow together as a community in ways that will be "good and pleasant" for us and for those around us?

<i>How have I experienced "Christian community" in this group?</i>	<i>How could my involvement in this group benefit myself and others?</i>