

## INTERVARSITY BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

### *Psalm 42:1-11, A Lament Psalm (60 minutes)*

#### **WELCOME (7 minutes)**

Icebreaker: How do you usually cope when you're feeling down?

We are studying the Bible together because we want to grow in our love for Jesus through Scripture and because we want to grow in our witness to Jesus through Scripture.

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

#### **GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)**

Let's remember our group norms as we study together today:

1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

#### **INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)**

For the ancient Hebrew people, the Psalms were songs of worship that captured their reality and guided them to turn their will and their longings toward God.

There are many types of psalms (this list is not exhaustive):

- Praise psalms celebrate and adore God's character
- Thanksgiving psalms express gratitude for God's blessings
- Wisdom psalms give practical moral teachings on how to live a righteous life
- Salvation history psalms remember God's work and affirm the covenant with God
- Lament psalms cry out to God in sorrow, grief, or distress
- Imprecatory psalms invoke God's action to intervene and bring justice
- Penitential psalms confess sin, express remorse, and acknowledge human frailty
- Trust psalms commit to God, no matter the circumstances

Today we will study a psalm of individual lament.

#### **SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)**

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?
- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Psalm 42:1-11 NIV –

For the director of music. A *maskil* of the Sons of Korah.

1 As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, my God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?

3 My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while people say to me all day long,  
“Where is your God?”

4 These things I remember  
as I pour out my soul:  
how I used to go to the house of God  
under the protection of the Mighty One  
with shouts of joy and praise  
among the festive throng.

5 Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.

6 My soul is downcast within me;  
therefore I will remember you  
from the land of the Jordan,  
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep  
in the roar of your waterfalls;  
all your waves and breakers  
have swept over me.

8 By day the Lord directs his love,  
at night his song is with me—  
a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God my Rock,  
“Why have you forgotten me?

Why must I go about mourning,  
oppressed by the enemy?”

10 My bones suffer mortal agony  
as my foes taunt me,  
saying to me all day long,  
“Where is your God?”

11 Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.

### **DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)**

Let's discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. How would you describe the emotional state of the psalmist?
2. Make a list of the images or metaphors the psalmist is using (look at verses 1-2, verse 7, and verse 10). Why do you think these images are being used and what are they communicating?
3. Notice that the psalmist flows from naming his situation, directing questions at his soul, and making commands to his soul. He is even being taunted by others who are asking him questions. What thoughts and feelings does this flow bring up for you?
4. How might this psalm have impacted the ancient Hebrews as they prayed and sang it in worship together?
5. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

### **RESPOND to the Scripture Text (10 minutes)**

The psalmist expresses deep sadness and desperation to the Lord. He seeks the Lord's presence and help. He remembers spiritual highs and deeply desires that God would save him from his troubles. He continues to remind himself to put his hope in the Lord and praise him throughout his trials and sadness.

When you are down, pour out your troubles to God, who rescues you.

Let's discern together how we can respond to what God is saying. We will answer one option from below, whichever seems most relevant to our group's discussion of the text.

- A. How do you deal with negative emotions? What do you imagine it would be like for you if you brought your emotions to God in prayer?
- B. Growing up, what did you learn from family members about how to deal with negative emotions? How does that compare to how the psalmist is expressing emotion?
- C. The psalmist reminds himself of past joys with the Lord and about the Lord's character. What truths about the Lord can you remind yourself of in difficult situations and emotions that you are facing?
- D. Use the psalm as a guide and write your own poem to express your pain to God.

### **CLOSE (2 minutes)**

Let's pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

*Tips for leading the group discussion (and more tips are available at [howto.bible](http://howto.bible)):*

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*

- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying “What else?” instead of commenting on every response.*
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contact [christy.gates@intervarsity.org](mailto:christy.gates@intervarsity.org) or [sara.chang@intervarsity.org](mailto:sara.chang@intervarsity.org) with any questions