

## INTERVARSITY BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

### *Psalm 74:1-23, A Lament Psalm (60 minutes)*

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

Icebreaker: What is something you don't like that others *do* tend to like?

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)**

The Psalms are Hebrew poetry, which is characterized by parallelism. This means that very often, one line makes a statement and the next line reinforces that statement by repeating it in a new way (synonymous parallelism), contrasting it (antithetical parallelism), or building on the idea (synthetical parallelism). Almost one third of the Bible is written in the genre of poetry, and as we study and interpret poetry, we should look be aware of images and metaphors that appeal to the senses, emotions and shifts of tone, and life experiences communicated artistically.

Today we will study a psalm of communal 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 74:1-23 NIV –

A *maskil* of Asaph.

1 O God, why have you rejected us forever?

Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture?

2 Remember the nation you purchased long ago,

the people of your inheritance, whom you redeemed—  
Mount Zion, where you dwelt.

3 Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins,  
all this destruction the enemy has brought on the sanctuary.

4 Your foes roared in the place where you met with us;  
they set up their standards as signs.

5 They behaved like men wielding axes  
to cut through a thicket of trees.

6 They smashed all the carved paneling  
with their axes and hatchets.

7 They burned your sanctuary to the ground;  
they defiled the dwelling place of your Name.

8 They said in their hearts, "We will crush them completely!"  
They burned every place where God was worshiped in the land.

9 We are given no signs from God;  
no prophets are left,  
and none of us knows how long this will be.

10 How long will the enemy mock you, God?  
Will the foe revile your name forever?

11 Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?  
Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!

12 But God is my King from long ago;  
he brings salvation on the earth.

13 It was you who split open the sea by your power;  
you broke the heads of the monster in the waters.

14 It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan  
and gave it as food to the creatures of the desert.

15 It was you who opened up springs and streams;  
you dried up the ever-flowing rivers.

16 The day is yours, and yours also the night;  
you established the sun and moon.

17 It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth;  
you made both summer and winter.

18 Remember how the enemy has mocked you, Lord,  
how foolish people have reviled your name.

19 Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts;  
do not forget the lives of your afflicted people forever.

20 Have regard for your covenant,  
because haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land.

21 Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace;  
may the poor and needy praise your name.

22 Rise up, O God, and defend your cause;  
remember how fools mock you all day long.

23 Do not ignore the clamor of your adversaries,  
the uproar of your enemies, which rises continually.

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

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

1. This psalm is much longer than others we have studied in this series, and just about every verse is made up of two lines that exhibit parallelism (see introduction). What types of parallelism do you see? What effect do they have on the flow of these lyrics?
2. The psalmist is crying out to God on behalf of the community. What do the messages of this psalm reveal about the situation and emotional state of the people?
3. It may be shocking to see the psalmist call God to destroy people, even though they are enemies who do evil (verses 10-11), yet prayer to God is probably the best place to bring raw emotions, even hate and rage. Why do you think a psalm like this is part of the Bible?
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 people are suffering and the psalmist cannot just stand by and watch. He brings the deep needs and raw emotions of the people to God. He calls God to act on behalf of the vulnerable, and his call to God demonstrates trust that God is strong enough and loving enough to do something about evil in the world.

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. What do you imagine might be different for your faith community if you all made a practicing of bringing your most raw emotions, even hate and rage, directly to God?
- B. What are some of the deepest needs of vulnerable people in your community or another community you care about? How could they be expressed to God?
- C. Use the psalm as a guide and write your own poem to cry out 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