

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God’s Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

A Psalm of Lament

In Psalm 10, David laments the oppressive and unjust activities running rampant in Israel. In light of the sad state of things, he has difficulty understanding the apparent inactivity and indifference of the LORD. He opens the Psalm with a question expressing his bafflement (v. 1). How can a God of justice and compassion tolerate the triumphant tyranny of the wicked? How can the LORD delay defending the defenseless?

After raising his question, David then describes the startling situation (vv. 2-11). He portrays the wicked oppressors as arrogant (v.2), proud (v. 4), presumptuous (v. 6, 11), deceitful (v. 7), and shrewd (vv. 8-9). They prey on the weak and scheme against those who may be described as naïve and less fortunate in an effort to store up wealth and power for themselves. In so doing, they arrogantly assume exemption from Divine judgment. The wicked oppressors have drawn the conclusion that David suggests in his opening question. They interpret God’s temporary delay in dealing with their sinful activities as permanent indifference.

Yet, David offers a faith-filled prayer in the last section of the Psalm (vv. 12-18). His faith-filled prayer is fueled by his knowledge of God. He refuses to affirm the wicked people’s audacity, choosing rather to rehearse back to God what he believes about God. The LORD is not ignorant of injustice (v. 14). Nor is the LORD indifferent towards oppression (vv. 17-18). David believes the LORD will be compelled by compassion to conquer the wicked and care for the wounded.

Study the Text . . .

Afflicted and Abandoned? (v.1)

The question raised by David is not unique to David. Believers throughout the ages have deduced from faith and experience the same concern. Reconciling the apparent discrepancy between what we know to be true about God with what we witness in the world is a difficult task. If God is a God of justice and compassion then why does oppression and injustice seem to prevail across the globe? If those whom God loves perpetually suffer at the hands of wicked people then can we trust His care? At what point do we lose heart? David’s inner conflict is compounded by the combination of affliction and abandonment. For not only are God’s people suffering, they seem to be doing so on their own.

- What kind of emotions may have driven David to ask this question?
- What kind of experiences may have driven David to ask this question?
- What is the significance of David addressing God by his covenant name, LORD?

Group Discussion . . .

- Have you ever asked David’s question?
- Have you ever felt abandoned by God in the midst of your affliction?
- Would you be willing to share your story with the group?
- How might thinking about the LORD’s covenant promises shore up a person’s faith when he or she feels not only afflicted by people but abandoned?
- What are some of His covenant promises?

Study the Text . . .**Assessing the Affliction (vv. 2-11)**

David provides a poetic account of what he's observed in Israel. He uses parallelism and metaphors to capture the dire scene. The passage may be divided into two sections. Verses 2-6 and 11 describe the inner disposition of the wicked; verses 7-10 emphasize their external schemes and activities. After describing the condition of their hearts, David then links their oppressive behavior with their internal disposition. The flow of the Psalm anticipates Jesus' teaching on how a tree will be known by its fruit (Matthew 12:33-37). Jesus memorably stated, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." In other words, the condition of the heart animates the confession of the mouth and conduct of the hands. In this case, arrogant and selfish hearts inspire the atrocious victimization of many people. Moreover, David makes clear that the twisted inner disposition of wicked hearts is rooted in either disbelief in God or a distorted view of God.

On a further note, Paul quotes verse 7 in his description of universal sinfulness in Romans 3:14.

- How does David describe the internal disposition of the wicked?
- Why does David describe the internal disposition of the wicked before describing their external behavior?
- How does David describe the external behavior of the wicked?
- What do the metaphors suggest about the oppressor's methods?
- What is significant about Paul quoting verse 7 in his description of universal sinfulness in Romans 3:14?

Group Discussion . . .

- What is the relationship between the condition of one's heart and the confession of one's mouth? Conduct of one's hands?
- How does a disbelief in God contribute to injustice?
- How does a distorted view of God contribute to oppression?
- How might an acknowledgement of divine judgment deter wicked ways?
- How might the reality of divine judgment encourage the oppressed?
- What does Paul's quoting of verse 7 in his description of universal sinfulness in Romans 3:14 say about the human heart?

Study the Text . . .**Addressing God in light of Affliction (vv. 12-18)**

David knows God well. This explains why he does not simply ask the hard question in verse 1, and why he is not driven to despair by his sin-ridden society. He knows that God's temporary delay in defending the defenseless does not mean he is permanently indifferent. So, he proceeds to talk to God about all that he knows to be true about God. In so doing, he shores up his faith and the faith of those who read his words. His prayer reminds readers to trust that God will right all wrongs.

- What does David ask God to do in verse 12?
- What does it mean for God to "forget not"?
- What are the truths about God that surface in David's prayer to God?

Group Discussion . . .

- What is the relationship between prayer and oppression?
- List all the truths about God mentioned in this passage.
- Discuss the implications of each truth as they relate to how believers should respond to injustice.
- Why is it important to rehearse back to God what we believe about God in our prayer life?
- How might such a practice strengthen faith and inspire patience in the face of affliction?

Small Group Guide – Week 16

A Psalm of Lament

The Church at Brook Hills

April 19-25, 2010

Psalm 10

- How might such a practice inspire action among God's people to curb injustice and oppression in Birmingham and throughout the world?
- What might we do now individually and maybe even together as a group?
- What does the Gospel teach us about how God has acted or will act to right all wrongs?