

HOME GROUP QUESTIONS FROM SERMON 28th July 2024

“When God seems distant”

Psalm 42 (English Standard Version)

Why Are You Cast Down, O My Soul?

To the choirmaster. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah.

1 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul 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 the day long,
“Where is your God?”

4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and
lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a
multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God;
for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of
Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

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

8 By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and 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 do I go mourning because of
the oppression of the enemy?”

10 As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all
the day long, “Where is your God?”

11 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in
God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

These questions relate to the sermon (10.30 and 18.00 services) on Sunday 28th July 2024
(available on the church website).

*Feel free to pick and choose questions / sub-questions as appropriate for your group’s
interest, preferred study style and time available. They are simply there to facilitate good
discussion/reflection. Do not feel you must go through all of them.*

(1) Opening Icebreaker. We are likely to have experienced times or experiences when God
seemed distant or absent.

(a) How did it feel and how did you respond?

(2) In dark times. The Psalmist is clearly in great emotional and spiritual distress, repeating his woes across the Psalm.

- (a) What is the essence of the Psalmist's distress and what are the causes?**
- (b) He uses vivid analogies and language to get across his distress. What are the key points/feelings/emotions he is trying to encapsulate?**
- (c) Have there been times when you've been: (i) spiritually dry/thirsty; and (ii) drowning / overwhelmed? What were the triggers, how did it feel, and how did you respond?**

(3) Faith – Surviving. The Psalmist could have become paralysed by his distress, but manages to hang in there.

- (a) What does he do to avoid paralysis and hang in there? Think about what is going on inside the Psalmist's mind and heart.**
- (b) To what extent do you do this when God feels distant or absent, and you feel very dry or overwhelmed? What helps or hinders you?**

(4) Faith - Reviving. After initially just hanging in there and not folding, the Psalmist does something to revive his flagging faith. He recalls a few things about God.

- (a) What does he recall? Five things are mentioned.**
- (b) How does this revive his spirit?**
- (c) How does this compare with the way you respond?**

(5) Faith - Recommitted. The Psalmist eventually gets to a place where, despite his despondency, he is able to place his hope in God (v5 and 11).

- (a) How would you characterise his hope and confidence?**
- (b) How does this compare with 'worldly' hope. Look also at Romans 15 v13 and Hebrews 13 v5 and v8.**
- (c) How does this compare with your hope?**

(6) Faith - Fluctuating. It is nevertheless not an easy road for the Psalmist. He clearly goes through spiritual ups and downs/highs and lows. The Bible is always realistic about life!

- (a) How does the structure of the Psalm indicate the Psalmist's spiritual ups and downs. Compare v1-5 with v6-11, and the way the sentiment changes again from verses 5 to 6 and 7.**
- (b) Nevertheless, the Psalmist always comes to the same conclusion. How might this be an encouragement for us? Look also at other Bible verses for encouragement e.g. Psalm 91 v1-2; Matthew 11:30; Philippians 4 v6-7; 1 Peter 5 v7.**