

Read **Psalm 42**

1. **Verses 1-4:** The psalmist's disillusionment was due to a combination of personal despair, heckling from enemies (v. 3), and social isolation (v. 4). Personal disillusionment led the psalmist to realise their deep thirst for God. How have the sufferings in our own lives (exacerbated by the pandemic crisis) uncovered the underlying thirst of our souls?

This is an intensely personal question. It would be beneficial for the group to hear first from their leader(s) if they are comfortable to share stories or experiences about how personal suffering led them to quiet reflection, self-realisation, and particularly towards deeper faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Suffering is always apocalyptic (meaning revelatory) in that it strips us from whatever is propping up our lives to reveal or uncover the quality, the strength, and the composition of our life's foundation if it is to stand alone without any support or trappings. How we deal with suffering and disillusionment in ourselves, with the people around us, with the people we must care and love, will reveal what we are truly, quietly, and unconsciously thirsting for. We are either athirst for God or we are athirst for something lesser.

2. **Verses 6-8:** The psalmist remembers God and His covenant even amidst their disillusionment. What are some spiritual practices that we must do as Christians to remember God's faithfulness in Jesus Christ even as we may at times feel forgotten and abandoned by Him?

We practice Christian remembrance personally and corporately. We personally remember who God is in Jesus by regularly reading, listening, and studying the Scriptures in prayer alone or with others. We corporately remember by singing songs of worship to God, by going through the liturgy, by celebrating the Eucharist, by our breaking of bread and fellowship with one another. We remember together by celebrating Christian high feast days, by the rites and habits of our faith, by going through the liturgical season throughout the Church calendar.

3. **Verse 9-10:** The psalmist prays to God even as they feel abandoned and forgotten by Him. How does prayer assist us in our grief and disillusionment?

John Calvin wrote in his Institutes that prayer is the spiritual exercise of our faith. Just as we keep fit by exercising our muscles and our heart by routine cardio and weight-training, praying to God exercises and stretches the heart and muscles of our faith. Also, prayer is conversation with God; and conversation takes process and would require multiple conversations. It is better to talk things over than not talk at all. While we may not hear God speak to us directly, He has already spoken to us directly in His Word. And He has finally spoken to us in His perfect way through Jesus Christ. We may not get

the answers and responses that we would like, but we can approach God in prayer, in conversation with Him, and access Him through His Word.

4. **Verses 5 & 11:** The psalmist repeats to himself the choral refrain of their personal disillusionment while preaching hope in God to their own soul. How does repetition in the Christian faith assist us in our journey through disillusionment and despair?

Repetition is a method of processing through a memory, an exercise, or an experience. It is equivalent to ruminating--chewing over the material to extract more and more from it. During grief, repetition is helpful to cope with loss and hurt; it is also useful to process through the negative experience to glean and extract any opportunity of learning and revelation. As Christians, we do not simply go over our painful memories for psychotherapeutic reasons. We process through them being mindful that the painful story or moments of our life is part of a Greater Story of God's love for the world in Jesus Christ. We do not ignore the evil in our lives, but we do not allow it dominion over our lives. We do not allow evil dominion in our lives by recalling in ourselves, by preaching to ourselves, by declaring the Good News of Jesus over and above the evil in our lives.