

March 13, 2022 – Small Group – Leader's Guide
Read Psalm 129

1. How can stories and reports of Christian discrimination around the world serve to edify, form, and encourage us as Canadian Christians who are largely privilege and protected in our religious beliefs and freedoms?

They can shape our theological and political imagination to enlarge our own capacity for suffering to bear the future cost of being Christians in the city, to augment our theology of suffering to not be surprised by the outcome of suffering for our faith but to not then pursue or chase after suffering as an essential Christian experience, to be discerning of how we articulate and reflect upon real experiences of religious discrimination in our own context in contrast to other experiences suffered by other Christians around the world.

2. How have experiences of perceived discrimination been exaggerated or distorted or co-opted to serve and foment particular narratives of Christian persecution in our nation?

We can develop a persecution complex that remakes us into victims of discrimination vs. being witnesses (i.e. martyrs) of the Gospel who respond in kindness and sacrifice in the face of inconveniences and even real discrimination where we can then lay down our rights and freedoms for the sake of those whose rights and freedoms are also maligned and ignored. Our witness as Christians becomes compromised when we insist loudly and angrily on our own rights and freedoms but do not do the same for others.

3. The psalmist remembers Israel's brutal history of persecution from the hands of their historic oppressors like the plowing of the backs of Jewish people. Their brutal history also testifies to God's salvation and His cutting the cords of the wicked every time. The cords refer to the ropes that bound the plowing machine together with the cattle or oxen. Cutting the cords renders the machine unusable. How have we seen God "cut the cords" of the wicked and dismantle the machinery of violence and evil in our lives?

Allow for open sharing about examples and testimonies for how God rescued us and others from the machinery of evil and violence.

4. The psalmist prays curses upon Israel's oppressors. The imprecatory psalms seem to run against the Christian principle of loving one's enemies. How are we invited as Canadian Christians to intentionally pray for God's justice upon evildoers and for the salvation of the oppressed in the world?

The imprecatory psalms and prayers take seriously God's justice for the here and now, teaching us as Christians to boldly ask God for immediate justice and relief, for Him to return upon the heads of evildoers their own evil schemes, and to develop in ourselves deep empathy and solidarity with the pains and outrage of those whom are

oppressed, to be angry for them and with them, to be praying with them and for them the judgement of God who alone can avenge, justify, and condemn. We ourselves are not acting as the executioners but as advocates and complainants before a good and righteous God with our voices of anguish, anger, and desperate longing, in ultimate hope of God's final verdict.