

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
YOU WILL ROB YOURSELF OF THE JOY OF DISCOVERY!**

**In case you don't have time to discuss all the questions,
be sure to ask your group which questions
they want discuss.**

PREPARATION

1. Before you read *Psalms 42 /43*, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (John 16:13). We have been using the prayer, *Holy Spirit, think through me until your ideas become my ideas*, or King David's prayer, *Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your law*.
2. Read *Psalm 42 /43* slowly and thoughtfully in at least two translations. Try reading these psalms *out loud*, letting your imagination "see" and "feel" what the psalmist is describing.

Read Aloud

Reader A: 1-11 odd verses

Reader B: 2-10 even verses

Reader C: 43:1-5

3. Write down some word pictures or phrases from *Psalm 42 /43* that resonate with *your* soul right now.

QUESTIONS

LAMENT: PSALM 42:1-4

4. What does the psalmist desire?

He desires God – specifically, "to meet with God"

What word pictures show the depth of his desire?

Deer panting for streams of water (probably a deer that is being hunted and running)

Extreme thirst

Tears being his "food" day and night; pour out my soul

5. *Reflect* on the images of a thirsty deer and flowing streams. Is thirst a pleasant sensation? What function does thirst serve? Is thirst necessary? How does all this relate to our desire for God?

Thirst is not pleasurable – yet it serves a necessary function of causing us to drink because our body needs water. If we did not become thirsty, we would not bother to drink what we need to live. The uncomfortable

Thirst for God is a feeling of God's absence or distance. It is not a pleasant sensation but if we didn't feel our lack of God we would never have the desire to pursue God. God makes us hungry and thirsty (not pleasant conditions) for him so that we will come to him. The "bad" leads us to the "good".

♥ What does the absence of God feel like to you?

♥ Make your own metaphor: As a _____, so my soul _____ for you.
(How would the metaphor go if you inserted "hungry baby" or "hurt child")

♥ In 42:2, the psalmist asks to "meet with God". How do you meet with God? What happens in your soul when you meet with God? This answer will probably be different for everyone. It is interesting to see how others describe it. What is it that lets you know you "have met God"?

6. The psalmist compares God to water. Write every way you can think of that *God* is like *water*. (You may want to consider the following references in your answer: **Revelation 21:6 and 22:17; John 7:38-39; Jeremiah 2:13.**)

There is no "right" answers. Everyone may have different answers. For starters: We need water to live just as we need God for life; water is the source of life; water was very precious and not easily attainable in Israel, which has a semi-arid climate. Water can also be a cleansing agent, just as God forgives and cleanses our hearts. Water can be a powerful force and hard to control and hold back. Water can do surprising things and can be found in different forms. Have some fun making comparisons.

- ♥ Describe a time you were thirsty for God and how your thirst was quenched.
- ♥ How thirsty are you for God right now? What could a person do if they didn't feel thirsty for God, but wanted to?

This is a good question to discuss. God says that if we seek and search for him, he will be found.

7. What does the psalmist's suffering cause him to do? **42:4**

Remembering what it used to be like when he was close to God – leading the procession at the temple with shouts of joy

How can memories be helpful and also unhelpful?

Memories help us relive and remember – keep something fresh in our mind and heart. They can also be painful because they are a constant reminder of what we DON'T have right now.

HOPE: PSALM 42:5

8. What does the Psalmist do to help himself cope with his distress?

He talks to himself (his soul). He asks himself questions and encourages his heart to believe and trust.

What phrases in his dialogue reflect his doubt and which ones reflect his hope?

Doubt – downcast soul – discouraged, sad, distressed

Hope – Put your hope in God; praise God (regardless of circumstance; calling God his SAVIOR

Discussion Question: Is it possible to have doubt and hope at the same time? Why or why not?

HOPE - confident expectation. When we hope, God hasn't showed up yet, but we are poised and waiting for when he will. Hope, in essence, is **waiting** for God to act, **confident** he will. Hope focuses on all that is true about God – his character and his actions. Hope says, "You are my God no matter how long I have to wait, because I know You will come through." Hope leads us away from despair and becomes our comfort in a hard time.

- ♥ What does the psalmist say he will do when he is discouraged? **Put hope in God and praise God**
- ♥ What is your strategy for hope during a hard time?

LAMENT: PSALM 42:6-7

9. In 42:6, what does the psalmist decide to do? **Remember what it used to be like even though he is far away from the temple**

How do you think this will help his downcast soul? **He hopes it will encourage and comfort him by remembering that he was once close to God. He is "reliving" the experience**

- ♥ Describe a time you felt alive and close to God. Would remembering this during a hard time comfort you? Why or why not?

10. How has the water imagery changed in **42:7** from that in **42:1-2**?

These waters seem powerful and destructive. Now he feels like the waters are crashing over him, beating him. He is again feeling alienation and despair. The waterfalls with its rocks, breakers, and waves and its awesome noise of rushing and falling waters is a metaphor of what his heart is feeling. Instead of enjoying the "living water" of the "living God", he now feels like God has turned on him. He has not control over his present circumstances, just like he cannot control the force of the waters.

What does the water signify now?

See above

Do you see the water in **42:7** as a positive or negative image? Explain your answer.

Some may see the water in verse 7 as a positive image – there is no right or wrong answer

♥ Picture a time you have been close to a large waterfall, swift rapids or crashing waves. How does the strength and energy of these waters relate to how the psalmist is feeling?

HOPE: PSALM 42:8

11. How would the actions of both God and the psalmist, as described in **42:8**, encourage hope during a difficult situation?

Even though his circumstances haven't changed, God still meets him with his daily love shown in many ways; at night the psalmist chooses to focus on God – to either listen to God singing over him or for him to sing to God (Like Paul and Silas singing to God at in the middle of the night while in prison after being beaten). The Psalmist doesn't stop praying even though he is discouraged.

♥ What are some specific things you could choose to do, when you are discouraged, that would strengthen your hope in God? Sing, listen to music, read scripture, spend time with "God" friends; meet with other believers; pray, praise; help someone else; serve others, etc. We can choose to do certain things whether or not we "feel" like it. Often our feelings follow after our choices.

LAMENT: PSALM 42:9-10

12. In his misery, what questions does the psalmist ask God in **42:9**?

Why have you forgotten me? Why must I wander in darkness oppressed by my enemies? (Yet he shows hope because he calls God his Rock)

♥ Is it okay to question God when we are discouraged? (**Matthew 27:46**) What purpose does it serve? Our example is Jesus who cried from the cross, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? This gives us permission to cry out and ask our questions of God. Expressing what is in our heart is always better and more healing than denial or "stuffing it".

13. Although the psalmist basically asks the same question in **42:9** that his foes ask in **42:3** and **10**, what is the difference?

He is crying out because he loves God and is anguish at his absence. When his enemies ask the question, "Where is your God?" they are mocking him and his faith. (It's the same thing as when we might make fun of someone in the family, but it's not okay for anyone OUTSIDE the family to do the same thing!)

♥ How do those close to you relate to you when you are down in the spiritual dumps? Do they help or hinder? What can you do for others when they are spiritually discouraged?

♥ What is the purpose of the psalmist telling God what he is feeling and how his enemies are treating him? As we learned in Psalm 116, God wants us to cry out to him. It shows our need and dependence on him. He often waits for us to ask for help. He won't fight us for control.

HOPE: PSALM 42:11

14. When you are spiritually discouraged, what is the value of entering a dialogue with yourself? Our minds can address our feelings. Feelings are always the result of thoughts. When we control our thoughts and choose what we will think about, our feelings will follow. (Philippians 4:8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.)

♥ What is the difference between talking to yourself and letting self talk to you?

When we let "self" talk to us, we are letting our feelings and emotions and "old voices" in our mind dictate our thoughts. When we talk to self, the mind is taking control of the conversation. See above.

LAMENT: PSALM 43:1-2

15. How does the psalmist's statements in 43:1-2 reflect the equation *Doubt + Faith = Hope*?

If we did not have doubt, we would not need faith or hope. His doubt is expressed in his questions, "Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning and oppressed." However, he shows faith when he calls God his stronghold. We see his hope in his requests of God – Vindicate me and plead my cause and rescue me. He hopes and waits until this happens.

HOPE: PSALM 43:2-5

16. How does the psalmist express confidence that God will hear and answer his prayer?

He assumes God will send out his light and truth and they will guide him. He knows that he will be close to God again at some point. He makes plans for what he is going to do when God does rescue him. He calls God his joy and delight. He tells himself to put his hope in God.

♥ What pictures come to mind when you think of God sending forth his **truth** and **light**? How does God's truth and light help us when we are discouraged?

Truth often stands for God's Word and everything that is true about God's character. When we are discouraged we can turn to the truth about God and we know he will act according to his character. Light is the opposite of darkness. Light leads and guides us. God is light. God's presence will drive away our darkness and discouragement and it will reveal the path we are to take.

17. What does the psalmist plan to do when God delivers him?

Go to altar of God (the source of his joy and delight) to meet with God. He will praise God with the harp.

♥ How can making plans for what you will do when the hard time is over help you when your soul is still downcast? Planning what we will do gets our eyes and mind off our present condition, but it also shows faith and hope that we believe that God will come through for us. We only make plans for something we believe will actually happen.

18. What do you plan to do when God delivers you from your hard time?

Have several share their ideas

RESPONSE:

Some may want to share how God spoke to them or showed them. At least talk about the experience itself. Hearing God's personal word to us is how we strengthen our relationship with God. Adding to our knowledge about God is not a relationship with him. God wants us to have a real encounter with him. He lives in us and he can speak to us. His words are loving, comforting and encouraging. His words give us hope in the midst of a hard time.

On the next page is all the "extra scripture" from this lesson in case you want to make copies for your group so that you can easily read together the verses referred to in the questions.

NIV

Revelation 21:6 He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

John 7:38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” **39** By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Jeremiah 2:13 “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

NLT

Revelation 21:6 And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give the springs of the water of life without charge!

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let each one who hears them say, “Come.” Let the thirsty ones come—anyone who wants to. Let them come and drink the water of life without charge.

John 7:38 If you believe in me, come and drink! For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water will flow out from within.” **39** (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)

Jeremiah 2:13 For my people have done two evil things: They have forsaken me—the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!

Matthew 27:46 At about three o’clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”