

Neighborhood Communion Group
Discussion Questions
The Psalms, part 2

Background

The idea behind neighborhood communion groups arose from the earliest Christian communities that gathered regularly in homes for a time of eating and talking, something often missing in our busy lives. As you gather with friends, think of it as a throwback to the early church, or a dinner party in our day. Below, you'll find a Scripture passage, along with some suggested questions. Neighborhood Communion is a chance to enjoy food and food for thought.

Scripture Passage

Psalm 13

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? ²How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? ³Consider and answer me, O Lord my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, ⁴and my enemy will say, 'I have prevailed'; my foes will rejoice because I am shaken. ⁵But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. ⁶I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Discussion

The preeminent Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann divides the psalms into three types: orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. The second category describes life when everything falls apart. These psalms can be corporate (Israel's suffering) or personal (as with this one). With this in mind, think about the following questions:

- 1) While the psalm begins by questioning how long the suffering will last, it is still addressed to God. The writer has not given up on God but instead dared to confront the Holy One. How do you feel about that? Are you comfortable expressing anger or disappointment to God? What do you currently want to say to God?
- 2) Most people think of the collection of psalms as songs of praise. In fact, psalms of lament make up about 70% of the 150 in our Bible. Fred Craddock described them as "praying through clenched teeth." Does it surprise you how many of the psalms are cries rather than praise? Does that proportion make sense in your world, your life?
- 3) Psalm 13 ends with a confession of trust in God, singing to the Lord. This is a common feature in psalms of lament, although Psalm 88 is an exception. What if you are not able to find words of praise in a dark time? Do you think lament by itself can be enough of a prayer offered to God? Do you sometimes feel pressure to be upbeat in your faith?