**Walking IN Faith - Lent 2013**

**Small Group Discussion Questions**

**An Introduction: Psalm 23**

February

17th – Psalm 23

18th – Psalm 1

19th – Psalm 46

20th – Psalm 51

21st – Psalm 71

22nd – Psalm 116

23rd – Psalm 145

We like to think that our emotions don’t influence our faith, that we stand firm and never waiver in difficult or in good times. The Psalms indicate otherwise. Have you read through many Psalms? What are some of the emotions and situations communicated within them?

How do these emotions an expression of faith?

We consider the Psalms to be the Hebrew people’s songbook. These are the song they used to worship, praise and pray to God. What does their content communicate to us about worship and experiencing *all* of our emotions in worship (consider that some psalms speak of frustration, feeling forsaken by God, angry, or alone as well as God’s faithfulness, love and glory)?

The 23rd Psalm is perhaps the most well-known outside of the church community. Frequently spoken or sung at memorial services it speaks to the hope we have in God when we are in the darkest of places physically, emotionally and spiritually. How might the words in Psalm 23 provide comfort in time of loss, grief or fear?

How does this speak to us about trusting in God?

We’ve all had experiences where words, spoken or written, that were intended for comfort brought anger, fear and a whole host of other non-comforting emotions. How would reading Psalm 23 when feeling angry, frustrated or even joyful be different from reading it when sad or grief stricken?

How does Psalm 23 connect us to the promises of God that anchor and sustain our faith?

Take a few moments and re-write Psalm 23 using language that expresses how you read and interpret this Psalm. Share your version with someone else. How are they different? How are they the same?

**Psalms of Lament – Sadness: Psalm 13**

**Lament Psalms - Grief**

24th – Psalm 13

25th – Psalm 69

26th – Psalm 102

27th – Psalm 38

28th – Psalm 83, 85

March

1st – Psalm 31

2nd – Psalm 30, 41

Do you have a strong memory of experiencing God’s love? If so, what is it?

We live in a world where being weak (physically, emotionally or spiritually) is looked down upon and trusting in God and others implies an inability to take care of ourselves. The belief that we are supposed to care for ourselves without the help of others affects how we walk by and grow in faith. Why is important to experience our feelings of weakness when we walk and grow in faith?

Read **Psalm 13:1**. Does God ever hide from his people? What does this verse reveal about what David, the writer, must have been experiencing when he wrote the psalm?

Have you ever felt abandoned or neglected by God?

How does feeling in such ways impact our faith?

How do feelings of sadness, grief and/or sorrow impact our faith and how we respond and communicate with God and others?

How does **Psalm 13** connect us to the promises of God that anchor and sustain our faith?

Many people today question how Christians can believe in a loving God who has the power to alleviate and destroy human suffering right now but has not done so. How would you respond to someone who questions why you believe in God even though suffering still exists in our world?

**Psalms of Lament – Anger: Psalm 137**

**Lament Psalms - Anger**

3rd – Psalm 137

4th – Psalm 5, 7

5th – Psalm 90

6th – Psalm 44

7th – Psalm 88

8th – Psalm 74

9th – Psalm 6

Anger isn’t an emotion we talk about all that much in a worship service or most church activities and yet it is an emotion we experience and so is also a part of our faith. Are there different kinds of anger?

What is the different between being angry at someone for cutting you off on the road and being angry about the violence in our city?

Read **Psalm 137**. This Psalm speaks to the Israelites experience while in exile in Babylon. What aspects of their exile are spoken of in this Psalm?

Why is it difficult to remember God’s faithfulness in the midst of feeling angry (even when our anger is not directed at God)?

Paul says “Be angry and do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26). Anger can be a great motivator IF we are led by God. What is difficult about allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us to address injustice in a Christ-like way? What actions can we take to make sure we are being led by the Spirit?

How does **Psalm 137** connect us to the promises of God that anchor and sustain our faith?

Read **Psalm 137:7-9**. These words seem rather harsh and difficult to read aloud and yet there are many modern day equivalents we could think of which we hear said in response to the hateful and violent acts committed today. How do we learn to respond with faith instead of anger?

**Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving: Psalm 98**

**Praise and Thanksgiving**

10th – Psalm 98

11th – Psalm 66

12th – Psalm 97, 98

13th – Psalm 99, 100

14th – Psalm 145, 146

15th – Psalm 147, 148

16th – Psalm 149, 150

How would you define what it means to “praise God”?

Worship (speaking specifically of worship services) might be what initially comes to mind when we consider what it means to praise God. How do we praise God outside of the seventy minutes spent in a service on a Sunday morning?

Does praising God come naturally to you? Explain.

Read **Psalm 98**. A good portion of worship services involves corporate singing. Why does music play such a prominent role in our understanding of worshiping God? What aspect of singing (rather than listening) changes our worship experience? How does listening rather than singing change the experience?

What emotion do verses **7-9** of this psalm convey regarding God’s return? How do these verses differ from other scripture passages that create a more ominous feeling regarding God’s final judgment?

How does **Psalm 98** connect us to the promises of God that anchor and sustain our faith?

What do you do in order to praise God with your life?

**Psalms of Trust: Psalm 62**

**Psalms of Trust**

17th – Psalm 62

18th – Psalm 3, 4

19th – Psalm 27, 121

20th – Psalm 127, 128

21st – Psalm 115, 124

22nd – Psalm 125, 126

23rd – Psalm 23

Trusting God plays a pivotal role in our ability to walk by faith. If we do not trust that he wants what is best for us we will struggle to follow his lead when what we want clashes with his call for our lives. Are there areas of your life that are more difficult to entrust to God’s care? If so, why?

How is trusting God an exercise in faith?

Read **Psalm 62:1-2.** How does David describe the trust he has in God? What language does he use to do so?

Continue with **vs. 3-4**. When faced with the possibility of being oppressed by people who were wealthy and more powerful than them the Israelites recognized the folly of trusting in earthly treasures and achievement. Why is it difficult to put all of our trust and hope in God rather than in what we can accomplish with our own two hands by ourselves?

Given the content of **vs. 3-4**, why do you think David repeats **vs. 1-2** (**62:5-6**)?

Read **Psalm 62:10b**. When we experience success (in the workplace, the classroom, relationship etc.) we can easily begin to put a great deal of trust and hope in those successes and in our own abilities. Why might David caution the Israelites on this front?

How does **Psalm 62** connect us to the promises of God that anchor and sustain our faith?

Throughout scripture we read of God’s faithfulness to his people and His mission to restore all of creation to himself. His love for his people remains steadfast and sure. Read **Psalm 62:12a**. What does steadfast love toward God, from us, look like?

**Psalms of the King: Psalm 110**

**Royal Psalms**

24th – Psalm 110

25th – Psalm 18

26th – Psalm 89

27th – Psalm 95, 96

28th – Psalm 116

29th – Psalm 22

30th – Psalm 130

**31st - Happy Easter**

**April**

1st – 6th – Psalm 119

What is a King? How would you describe a King’s job and the relationship between a King and his subjects?

Read **Psalm 110**. The disciples saw this psalm as speaking of Christ; He is the king of which it speaks. What are the defining characteristics of the king presented in the Psalm? Would you describe Christ in the same way?

We often speak of the unexpected nature of Christ’s life: a king born in a humble manger, sent to save and redeem God’s people through the sacrificial giving of his life upon the cross. He was not the Messiah the people expected. He was not the King the people expected – or wanted. What has been one of the most unexpected part of your faith and/or growing in faith?

Read **Psalm 110:4**. We read about Melchizedek, a man who was both priest and king in Genesis 14. The author of the book of Hebrews makes a connection between Jesus and this Old Testament priest-king. Jesus is both king and priest, offering his life as a sacrifice on our behalf. How does being both king and priest affect how Jesus fulfills each role?

How does **Psalm 110** connect us to the promises of God that anchor and sustain our faith?

Christ is our King; He is our Lord and Savior. What does it mean for Christ to be the Lord of our lives?

The people did not get the king they expected in Jesus. Have there been moments as you’ve grown in faith where you have struggled with our Saviors character, how he went about saving us and who he calls us to be in the world? If so, what are they and how have they impacted your growth in faith?