

Summer in the Psalms: Psalm 130

The Realities of Life

For many of us, life sort of happens at a predictable rhythm. Monday through Saturday, our life is filled with mundane routines, interactions with others (some meaningful...others not), periods of work, and times of rest. Then comes Sunday... in some ways these days aren't that different (we still have some routines, interactions, things to do, etc.), but we also go to church, and there we can worship God with his people - singing, praying and receiving and responding to God's word.

In the regular rhythms of life - work, meals, chores, commute, Netflix, video games, workouts, and other activities - it can be easy to skip past the reality of God's assuring presence, his hope-filled promises, and his life-giving power. How many times during one of these ordinary days suddenly realized that you've gone through that day (and perhaps the day before that) without even thinking about God? While there may be times where God feels very near, many of us would say we've also had seasons in our lives where he felt very distant.

It boils down to an issue that all of us struggle with to some degree...there can be a gap between what we know about God in our head and what feel about God and his presence in our hearts. This "head-heart disconnect" comes from the fact that often throughout our lives, our experience of God doesn't match with what we know about God.¹ The reality of this disconnect, and mismatch, associated with our relationship with God can leave us fearful that we are not good enough as a Christian, apathetic after repeated attempts to feel something from God end in disappointment, or hardened after giving up on God, who we think has given up on us.

You Are Created to Know and Experience God

Given the realities just discussed, the Christian life seems confusing, so hard to figure out. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins so that we would be reconciled with God. However, the best news of the gospel is that God saved us so that we could know him, to enjoy life with him, and to experience his love. God has invited us into relationship with him, and we can enjoy this relationship right now, not just in heaven. In addition, because of Jesus, we don't have to be perfect and have it all together in order to engage with the Father. Indeed, Jesus makes communion with God possible because he is a perfect and unfailing savior.

Believe it or not, God is pursuing you, specifically your heart. He wants to win your affections. He created you to adore him and to be overwhelmed with his love. He delights when you seek him for refuge when you are afraid. In your stillness, he wants you to know he is God.

What reality is pressing down on you? Honestly describe how you are experiencing your relationship with God.

¹ This "head-heart disconnect" can also happen from the other direction. We think we know how God operates (or at least how we think he *should* operate) and then when he operates differently, it throws us. This is why an exercise like this one is so valuable...we bring ourselves and our current circumstances under the truth and leadership of our strong and loving Father who guides us and shepherds us through his words of truth.

Experiencing God through His Word

God's time-tested way of establishing and deepening the connection between our heart and his is through receiving, praying and living out his word by the power of his Spirit. God's word gives us new life and is implanted in our hearts (James 1:18, 21). When Jesus declared himself to be the living water (John 4:7-14) and the bread of life (John 6:26-35), he was confirming that he alone satisfies all that we deeply hunger for. Every Christian needs to learn how to draw near to God and experience his love through his living word (Hebrews 4:12). With your current reality in mind, listen to what God has to say to you through his word in Psalm 130. Afterward, as you have opportunity, share what you've learned with a friend or with those in your community circle.

Receiving God's Word — Psalm 130

A SONG OF ASCENTS

- ¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!
- ² O Lord, hear my voice!
 Let your ears be attentive
 to the voice of my pleas for mercy!
- ³ If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
 O Lord, who could stand?
- ⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
 that you may be feared.
- ⁵ I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
 and in his word I hope;
- ⁶ my soul waits for the Lord
 more than watchmen for the morning,
 more than watchmen for the morning.
- ⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord!
 For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
 and with him is plentiful redemption.
- ⁸ And he will redeem Israel
 from all his iniquities.

What did you experience in your heart and mind as you received God's word?

Praying God's Word—Psalm 130

Prayer flows out of your relationship with God. Prayer not only involves crying out to God from your heart, but more importantly, involves listening to God, as you hear his heart through his word. Praying God's word guides what you pray, shapes how you pray and gives voice to your prayers. You can be confident when you pray God's word since his word reveals his purposes and desires.

- Example of praying through Psalm 130...*Father, you know the depths of my pain and my need. In those times where I feel I can barely hang on any more, I'm reminded that you hear my voice and that you forgive me...that gives me hope. I forget this so often, Lord, but you are all I need. Help me to value you and the security, joy and life you bring me through your redeeming love above all other things.*
- Take a moment to pray through Psalm 130. You may pray about what you noted above or the Spirit may move you to pray in a totally different way as you work your way through the psalm.
- As you pray you may find yourself *adoring* God, *confessing* to God, *thanking* God and *praying for* yourself and for others.

How did God shepherd you as you prayed through Psalm 130?

The Father knows your heart and knows your needs. As amazing that is, even more incredible is that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are praying for you, as God's people, without interruption (Isaiah 53:12, Romans 8:26- 27 and 8:34, Hebrews 7:25). Given that God's word reveals God's will, it makes sense that Jesus and the Holy Spirit pray God's word for you, including Psalm 130.

How may the Son and Spirit be praying the Father's will for you as expressed in Psalm 130?

(Write out the Son's and Spirit's prayer on your behalf to the Father. Include your name in the prayer.)

Living Out God's Word — Psalm 130

Receiving and praying God's word draws you into God's presence and shapes your thinking and response to your circumstances, enabling you to better walk this stage of your journey by faith. In other words, receiving and praying God's word are always connected with living God's word.. You can't fully understand God's word without living it out and you can't fully live out God's word without receiving and praying his word.

Given what you noted about what reality is pressing down on you, or how you are struggling in your relationship with God, consider how God is calling you to **trust** and **obey** him so that you can live his word, which enables you to experience his blessing and find freedom found in Christ.

How Can I Live Out Psalm 130?

List 1 or 2 practical ways God is calling you to live out the truths found in Psalm 130. Here are some examples:

- When I am feeling distant and disconnected from God, I will look to Jesus, my loving Savior, and remember that he draws me close through the cross (130:1-4).
- Rather than beat myself up over and over because of my sin, I will rest in the reality that Jesus paid the penalty for my sin on the cross. Because of Jesus, I can be forgiven (130:3-4).
- Seeing that God's love and his truth is so beautiful and satisfying, I will make whatever changes I need to make to set aside time each day to be in God's presence (130:5-6).
- When I am fearful and anxious, I will remember that God is my refuge and that because of his never-failing, always-prevailing love, I am never alone (130:7-8).