

Your Focus Sets Your Direction

Psalm 122-123

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The Way Up

Reflect

Outline: Recap

Realize

Points to Ponder

Respond

Questions to draw out understanding.

REFLECT

If you don't know your destination, it doesn't matter what kinds of directions you're using. But when you have a specific outcome in mind, you'll follow whatever steps — no matter how specific they are — to get there. Our focus always determines what direction we take...so if we could just get our focus right, we'd know the right steps to take through life too. In this weekend's message, we'll zero in on what the BEST focus is, in any given situation.

[LINK to SMALL GROUP VIDEO MATERIALS](#)

REALIZE

1. Be excited to be the church

- **Psalm 122**
- **Leader Notes**
 - Whatever you focus on is what you end up building your life around. Whatever is filling our thought life is molding and shaping our life. In these psalms, we see some of the key things we should focus on.
 - God desires union with us. He wants to be connected to us and enjoy community with people who are committed to Him. Jerusalem played an important role in that relationship when this Psalm was written. People would journey to the city specifically to meet with God. As we draw closer to God, we begin to see his love for those around us.
 - God's plan for us is never to live in isolation, but to be a part of his corporate people, the church. It's "not cool" culturally to be part of the church, but it's something we should be excited about. When we're excited about our identity as children of God (individually and corporately), we will focus on the right things.
- **How are you participating (or not participating) in God's family, the church? If you're not excited about being the church, why is that? How is God challenging your thinking right now?**

2. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem

- **Psalm 122**

- **Leader Notes**

- God still has a special plan for the city of Jerusalem, and as believers, we need to continue to pray for the peace and welfare of Jerusalem and for the Jewish people, because they're God's people.
 - When we are close to God, we care about the things He cares about. When we are living in community with Him and caring for His people, we find ourselves seeking peace and praying it over the people and places God cares about. We will find ourselves seeking the good of others and doing what is best for them.
 - Jerusalem is both literal and metaphorical in scripture. In the metaphorical sense, Jerusalem represents God's kingdom, and Babylon represents the chaotic kingdom of darkness. In any situation, we need to pray for God's peace to triumph over the chaos and disorder the enemy wants to wreak upon the world.
- **How can you start praying for the salvation of God's chosen people, the Jews? As you observe your current circumstances and relationships, how can you begin praying for peace and reconciliation both among people and between the people you know and God himself?**

3. The way up is to look up

- **Psalm 123**

- **Leader Notes**

- We need to look up to God in heaven with a sense of dependence. When we experience trials and suffering, we need to remember we are not independent — and that's a good thing for us. Without Jesus, we can do nothing, but dependence on Jesus is not a position of weakness. It's the strongest place we can be.
 - Allowing God to work through our weaknesses is a challenge, but we are following the example of Jesus. He humbled himself entirely to become weak, and we can humble ourselves and depend on him, trusting that God will supply our lack.
 - The Psalmist cried out to God for help and mercy because he was facing circumstances beyond his ability. He knew that he needed God to look on him and help him. Only God can meet us in our deepest need. While he might use other humans to meet those needs, it is God and God alone who can look on us and help us in any situation.
- **Are there any ways in which you've been trying to function independently from God? What would it look like to practice dependence in those specific areas of your life? How do you need God to show you mercy in your time of need right now?**

Optional Follow-up Questions:

- What makes you say that?
- How do you feel about that?
- How would you explain your answer to a non-Christian friend or neighbor?
- Why did God design it to work that way? Why not just do (whatever else) instead?
- What would you say to someone who disagrees with that?
- Why do we really have to do it like that? Why can't we just go (some other route) instead?