

Praise and Vanity

Psalm 126-127

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The Way Up

Reflect

Outline: Recap

Realize

Points to Ponder

Respond

Questions to draw out understanding.

REFLECT

If you're experiencing suffering that seems impossible to change, you're the perfect candidate for a miracle. One of the amazing promises Jesus gives us in his Word is that sorrow is momentary. So if you're facing impossible pain, you're in the middle chapters — God's writing an end to your story that is beyond what you can imagine now, but is totally beautiful and full of joy. In this weekend's message, we'll journey together through the pain, with the expectation that God's coming plans are way better than anything we can imagine now.

[LINK to SMALL GROUP VIDEO MATERIALS](#)

REALIZE

1. Don't forget to praise on the way up

- **Psalm 126:1-3**
- **Leader Notes**
 - This Psalm remembers the exile and captivity of the Israelites. This was part of the promises of God to them. The Lord had told them from the beginning that if they walked faithfully with him, he would bless them. And if they didn't, they would suffer consequences. So as this Psalm opens, the writer is remembering one of those consequences: the children of Israel were exiled. But the Lord brought them out of exile, and this is where we find the Psalmist.
 - This is important because it shows us we need to praise on the way up. When the Lord brings us out of whatever hard situation we've been in, we need to remember to praise him and thank him for his deliverance.
 - Habakkuk 3:17-18 — When everything is wrong, we still choose to rejoice in the Lord. No matter what is going wrong, we know there's always something right if we are in Christ. And we can rest in our knowledge of God's character: whenever there is injustice, God wants to do a work.
 - The Psalmist uses the image of the streams in the south of Israel. In the summer months, the streams dry up. But every winter and spring, water comes down from higher ground, and the streams start flowing again. So he's saying, as assuredly as the streams start flowing again, so sure is the Lord's deliverance for his people.
- **Describe a time the Lord brought you out of a difficult situation or season of life. Did you take the time to praise him? If not, take some time to thank him now. Write in your journal or share with your group something you're facing right now where you are waiting for deliverance. How can you praise God right now and also bring your needs before him?**

2. The sorrow is momentary

- **Psalm 126:4-6**
- **Leader Notes**
 - Those who sow in tears reap in joy. We know from this Psalm and the Beatitudes as well that mourning's part of God's plan for happiness. It would be inhuman for us not to shed tears. He's asking us to be truly human, not inhuman.
 - In this Psalm, the writer isn't referring to a one-time cry: the man in his depiction has a whole bag of tears! His grief is so great he's continually weeping, like seeds he's sowing. These are long-time hurts, and as he proceeds in his work and walk, he's scattering his tears continually.
 - Then the Lord says, "doubtlessly" the person who has sown in tears will reap in joy. Not only will you experience joy, but you'll return with your arms full of sheaves — a harvest, with your hands full!
 - Happiness isn't the absence of tears. It's understanding the purpose of tears: that if we sow in tears, we'll come back full of joy and fruitfulness.
 - If you're in a season of grief right now, this is not the end of the story. You're in the middle chapters. God's got more to write in that story.
- **"Those who sow in tears reap in joy." What would it look like to trust this promise in your own story? What story are you in the middle of right now?**

3. Don't be vain

- **Psalm 127:1-2**
- **Leader Notes**
 - No matter how badly you want something, if God's not in it, it won't happen. Nothing we do will ultimately prevail against God's purposes. We don't want to pursue ways God has not blessed.
 - Lamentations 3:37-40 — We all need to examine our ways. God gives us energy and passion for a purpose, but we so often spend it on futility. When we link up hands with God and surrender to the Holy Spirit, he can harness our passions for his purposes.
- **Is there any path you're pursuing right now that is futile because God is not in it? How do you need to submit your passions and talents to God's purposes?**

4. Kids are God's blessing

- **Psalm 127:3-5**
- **Leader Notes**
 - Family is one of the most challenging things for many of us. God holds out the ideal to us, what he intends for us: he intends for family to be a blessing to all of us. God's plan for families is unique.
 - Whether your family is extraordinary or extraordinarily heartbreaking, God adopts us into a brand new family. When we put our faith and trust in Jesus, we become children of God and receive a brand new family too. The family of God can't replace our physical families, but the spiritual family of the children of God can heal what we have experienced.
- **What does family represent for you? How do you need healing because of past familial experiences? How can you be engaged in the family of God? How can you be an agent of healing in someone else's life?**

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?