

Prayer

Communicating with God

Carol Wilson

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Psalms 42; 43

The Pursuit of Prayer; Thirst for God

A sense of guilt or duty might motivate someone to do a good thing for a while, but not for a lifetime. Whether learning a language or exercising regularly or caring unselfishly for a loved one or praying, you need a strong desire in the core of your being to keep you going.

Read Psalm 42:1-4

1. From verse 1, picture a deer being chased over hills, through woods, and across fields by hunters or a pack of dogs. Describe its physical symptoms and the intensity of its thirst.

2. Describe the intensity of the psalmist's thirst for God.

3. What are some of the circumstances of life today that could cause you to “eat tears” day and night?

4. What are some of the ways people in today’s society try to quench their desperate inner thirst?

How does the psalmist intend to satisfy his panting thirst?

5. If you were experiencing emotions similar to this psalmist, what word pictures would you use to describe that level of spiritual thirst?

Read Psalms 42 and 43, noticing all the questions.

Note: Scholars generally agree that Psalms 42 and 43 were originally written as one prayer-poem, and were later split into two psalms.

6. On the following chart, record all the questions in these psalms. Include verse references.

Questions the psalmist's enemies ask him	Questions the psalmist asks God	Questions the psalmist asks himself

7. Which question, mentioned twice, does the enemy ask over and over, all day long?

Satan is the enemy of your soul. He may taunt you all day long with thoughts that seem like your own. When he raises the question, “Where is your God?” what are some possible responses you can make?

8. How does this repeated question affect the psalmist?

How does it affect you?

9. What reasons might lie behind the questions the psalmist asks God?

When have you felt like asking the same questions?

*Note: On the cross, Jesus asked, “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**” (Matthew 27:46).*

10. What basic truths about God does the psalmist cling to in these two psalms, even in his despair?

11. What questions does the psalmist ask of himself three times?

What value might there be in asking these “Why?” questions of yourself?

12. As the psalmist keeps asking himself why he’s so *thirsty*, so *downcast*, so *disturbed*, what good advice does he give himself (verses 42:5, 11; 43:5)?

How does he show that he expects to find satisfaction for his desperate thirst?

13. Psalm 42:8 stands at the very center, the pinnacle of this combined prayer-poem. How does this confident statement answer the devastating “Where?” question you looked at earlier?
14. Read Psalm 43:3-4 aloud. What methods or means might God use to answer this prayer for you?

Why would these verses be an excellent prayer to offer to God daily?

PRACTICING PRAYER

1. Using a word picture from question 5, tell God of your spiritual thirst for him, either silently or aloud. Ask God to teach you to draw closer and closer to him through prayer.
2. In Psalm 42:8, the psalmist affirms God's song in the night. In 43:4, he promises to praise God musically with the harp. Music is a meaningful channel for expressing prayer and praise to God. Use music this week to praise God. You might listen to Christian music, sing a favorite hymn, or make a special effort to sing with meaning and feeling in church. Plan to share with the group next time how you praised God musically.
3. If you are dissatisfied with the intensity of your desire for fellowship with God, what could you do this week to help that desire grow stronger?

A LESSON FROM NATURE

When a mother bird alights on the edge of the nest, it's the nestling with the loudest cry and the widest mouth that gets the food. God promises, ***Open your mouth wide and I will fill it*** (Psalm 81:10 NASB).