

## **Psalms of Ascents Series: “Songs for the Road” Meeting Guide**

Note: questions have adapted and taken from Calvary Baptist Church of Santa Barbara, Psalms of Ascents Series, North Metro Church Psalms of Ascent Study Guide, and Eugene Peterson’s book *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*.

### **Pray**

Apart from God, we can do nothing. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion. Throughout your time together, continue asking God for help.

### **Read Scripture**

Read Psalm 128 and 129 together. (Recommend choosing 1 of these Psalms for your CG discussion)

### **Bible Study**

The bulk of your time will be spent discussing God’s Word together.

### **Remember:**

- Walk through the Bible study together using the HEAR method and talk about what stuck out most to you in the passage.
- Make sure you move discussion to the application section of your study.
- Affections, beliefs, and practices: Make sure to apply the passage to all of your life.

### **Pray**

- Take time to pray for one another and ask for His grace to apply His Word to our daily lives as pilgrims traveling to our true home.

### **Psalm 128 (ESV)**

*Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways!*

*<sup>2</sup>You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;  
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.*

*<sup>3</sup>Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots around your table.*

*<sup>4</sup>Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD.*

*<sup>5</sup>The LORD bless you from Zion!*

*May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life!*

*<sup>6</sup>May you see your children’s children! Peace be upon Israel!*

### **Open:**

- What makes you happy? Why does it bring you happiness?

### **Study:**

- 1) According the Psalm 128:1, what two “ingredients” will result in the Lord’s blessing? How would you describe each of these in your own words?

- 2) Psalm 128 traces “the quiet blessings of an ordered life...from the center outwards.” What blessings are described for each of the following?

One who fears the LORD (vs. 1-2)

- How does this text relate to Psalm 127:1-2?

The family (vs. 3-4)

- How does this blessing relate to Psalm 127:3-5?

Israel as a whole (vs. 5-6)

- What is the significance of this passage today?

In reflecting on Psalm 128, Eugene Peterson wrote: “The easiest thing in the worlds is to be a Christian. What is hard is to be a sinner. Being a Christian is what we were created for. The life of faith has the support of the entire creation and the resources of a magnificent redemption. The structure of this worlds was created by God so we can live in it easily and happily as his children.”

- 3) Do you agree with Peterson’s assessment? Why or why not? Does this remark give you any new insights into Psalm 128? If so, what are they?
- 4) What are the foundational views of God and His character expressed in Psalm 128? How does this relate to our response to “fear the LORD”?

### **Apply:**

- 5) Do you have a high or low view of God right now? What do you believe is influencing your view of Him?
- 6) How can we grow to have a healthy fear of the LORD? Where might we need help?

### **PRAY:**

- Ask God for help to have a high view of Him and His supremacy over your life.
- Ask God for power to walk in a healthy fear of the Lord.
- Take time to give thanks to God for the supreme blessing we have because of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Psalm 129 (ESV)

*“‘Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth’ – let Israel now say—  
2 ‘Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me.  
3 The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows.’  
4 The LORD is righteous; he has cut the cores of the wicked.  
5 May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward!  
6 Let them be like the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up,  
7 with which the reaper does not fill his hand nor the binder of sheaves his arms,  
8 nor do those who pass by say,  
    ‘The blessing of the LORD be upon you!  
    We bless you in the name of the LORD!’”*

### Open:

- What is your favorite childhood memory and why?

### Study:

**Background Information:** In this Psalm, the pilgrim reflects on the history of Israel, all the persecution and oppression the people have undergone, and the perseverance that brought them back to Jerusalem. Thus, this psalm is likely written after the exile in Babylon, when the people of God were able to return to their homeland and to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. The beginning of the psalm is a reflection of a long history of captivity and persecution, accompanied by gratefulness at the Lord’s protection in preserving a remnant.

- 1) What do you think of when you think of the words patience, endurance and perseverance? Do you think of a resigned passive acceptance of the way the world is? Or do you think of an active endurance, fighting through persecution and moving from strength to strength? Explain.

There is an interesting illustration in verses 3-4 of this psalm. The people of Israel are pictured as lying face-down while their enemies are “plowing furrows” into their back – long, painful gashes back-and-forth, bloody and destructive. However, the Lord “cuts the cords” – that is, He severs the plows from the oxen. In other words, the wicked are still moving back and forth, trying to inflict pain on Israel, but what they haven’t realized is that all their attempts to inflict harm are useless, because the Lord has rescued Israel.

- 2) Have you ever been afflicted with a vengeful boss, teacher, co-worker, or another authority figure? Recall what it was like and what it was like for God to remove the ability of that person to truly harm you, despite all their best efforts. Share with the group.
- 3) In the next illustration in verses 5-7 the psalmist prays for revenge on his enemies. What do you think of seeking revenge on an enemy? Do you think that this sentiment lines up with Christian love and forgiveness? Why or why not?

**Apply:**

- 4) When you go before the Lord with prayers of complaint and distress, do you sing in confidence when He responds to you? What can you actively do today to increase your reliance on God to provide the strength that you need to continue to walk faithfully with Him during trial (persecution, affliction, suffering)?
- 5) Take some time to recount what God has granted to you already through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How can these blessings provide you hope to patiently endure the long journey of salvation? How can we pray for you to endure?

**PRAY:**

- Ask God for to remember His deliverance of you in the past.
- Take time to ask God for help to patiently walk with Him as a pilgrim as you await the completion of your salvation.
- Take time to pray for those who are actively opposed to you and ask the Lord to meet them with mercy through the Gospel.