

Talking to God about it
Psalm 6 – Leaders version

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

1. **STICKERS** Do you think there is anything that you can't talk to God about? Why?

Just read out the answers, don't try to come to a conclusion. Ask the group what sorts of things they think people in general would not feel able to talk to God about, and why people would find this hard – guilt, shame, believing that God's got bigger fish to fry etc.

What does the passage say and mean?

Read Psalm 6

60 minutes

2. What do you think the background to this psalm is?

Don't try to come to a conclusion or to pick up on any detail, just think about what might be going on that David would write such a psalm. Then explain that this was probably written during the time of the rebellion of David's son, Absalom, which was partly due to David's failings as a parent.

3. Read v1. What does David recognise about himself and about God in this verse?

That he is guilty before God and deserving of God's anger and discipline. It is implied that he knows he cannot stand (survive the ordeal) in the judgment of God.

4. **SHOUT-OUT** Read v2-3 and 6-7. How does David describe his emotions?

He gives a physical description. List the symptoms on the flip-chart – faint, physical pain, exhausted, prolonged suffering etc. David isn't just feeling a bit guilty in v2-3 or a bit emotional in v6-7, he is overwhelmed by it. He seems to have a good understanding in v2-3 of how offensive his sin is to God and how much he is in need of God's mercy.

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Do you think it's a good thing to feel such a depth of guilt as David does in v2-3? When is this appropriate and when is it not?

Such a depth of guilt is good when it reflects our understanding of the depth of our sin and of God's holiness. God's forgiveness takes away our guilt (if it doesn't take away the guilty feeling, then we need to ask ourselves 1. whether we have understood the cross properly and 2. whether we have forgiven ourselves).

5. Read v3 again. Do you get the impression that David got an answer from God straight away? Why might this be?

It sounds as if David has been praying for some time and doesn't feel like he's getting a response...

Co-ordinate a discussion about why our prayers are not answered straight-way or in the affirmative.

The film 'Bruce Almighty' is a good illustration of why this is – Bruce is given the job of answering prayers and gets so busy that he just answers yes to everything and chaos ensues! Think about what it would mean if prayers were answered immediately and 'yes' – God would be a slot-machine under our control (so he wouldn't be God), he would not be sovereign, he would not be able to act in our best interests, we would not learn from the discipline of depending on God in prayer and waiting on him, etc.

Make sure that the group understand that God hears their prayer first time; he's not ignoring them, even when he doesn't answer straight away. Think about why we should persist in prayer / whether we should ever stop praying about something and leave it in God's hands etc.

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How might this understanding of how God responds to our prayers help you in your prayer life?

6. Read v4. On what basis does David ask God to save him?

David recognises that God can save him (forgive him) and will do it on the basis of His unfailing love – not on the basis of David's deserving to be saved or that David has prayed enough now etc.

7. What do you think v5 means?

David is saying to God that, while he is alive, he can proclaim God to others and praise God. But, right now, he is standing before God as a guilty sinner who recognises that his sin has separated him from God. He's asking God to forgive him so that he can witness and worship with a clear heart, reasoning that a corpse cannot do this. The overarching message is that, ultimately, what matters is that God is honoured and

glorified. David knows, even in the midst of this emotional crisis, that it's not all about him, it's all about God. (Remember, this was written before the cross, when there was no clear concept of resurrection).

8. Read v8-9. What does David realise here?

The psalm turns at v8. David knows that God has heard him, is with him and has accepted his prayer. You can almost see David standing up straight and looking his enemies in the eye!!

9. How do you think David feels now?

Review the flip-chart from Q4 and write these responses in a different colour. Consider the emotions he would feel in v8-9 – relief, peace, hope for his future, safe etc.

10. What does David say will happen in v10?

His enemies will be defeated – they will be overwhelmed with shame.

11. What does v10 mean for us?

Ultimately there will be justice, but we may not see it in our life time or the lifetime of our enemies. God's name will be honoured, and justice will be done, when Jesus comes back.

12. Having done this study, do you think there is anything that you can't talk to God about?
Why?

Revisit the flip-chart from Q1. Ask if anyone has changed their minds, and ask whether people now feel able to talk to God about anything and everything? If not, why not? Gently remind the group that God knows about it anyway, so one of the reasons we feel unable to talk to him is that we don't want to hear ourselves saying the words... And that itself is a good reason to talk to God about it, simply to admit to ourselves that this issue is a real thing.

A verse from a hymn that is helpful on the topic of prayer, to share with your group:

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
Oh what peace we often forfeit,
Oh what needless pain we bear.
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

JM Scriven 1885

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