

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
PSALMS-LESSON 11
WEEK OF DECEMBER 1–DECEMBER 5
PSALM 42-43
DEALING WITH DESPAIR

Book 2 of the Psalms begins with **Psalm 42** and concludes with **Psalm 72**. **Psalm 42 and 43** were originally one psalm. **Psalm 42** is one of the few Psalms where the location of the author is provided. The Psalmist is in the far north of Israel; the mountainous region where Mt. Hermon and the headwaters of the Jordan river are located. (**Psalm 42:6**) He is separated from Jerusalem, away from the place of worship, celebration and fellowship of the redeemed. (**Psalm 42:4**). The Psalmist does not give any indication why he is separated from other believers.

Psalms 42 and 43 are about depression. “Since most of us are downcast at some time or another, we turn naturally to a Psalm that asks honestly and forthrightly, ‘Why are you downcast, O my soul?’ (**42:5**). And we are encouraged when it answers hopefully, ‘Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.’” *An Expository Commentary Psalms*, Vol. 2 James Montgomery Boice, pg 366.

As a result of the study of these Psalms, may we grow in trusting more in God and less on our feelings that rise and fall with our emotions and circumstances.

Read Psalm 42 and 43 together as a single writing

1. From **Psalm 42:1-2** how does the Psalmist describe his desire for an intimate relationship with the Lord?
2. What are the questions repeated in verses **42:5, 42:11** and **43:5**? What emotions does the Psalmist describe in these verses?
3. In **Psalm 42:6**, how does the Psalmist describe the condition of his soul? What other verses in **Psalm 42 and 43** convey a feeling of abandonment by God, distance from God and depression?
4. In **Psalm 42:3, 42:9** and **42:10**, describe the mocking of the wicked, the unredeemed. How did those taunts possibly impact the Psalmist?
5. What was the Psalmist thinking about the past in **42:4**? Would those thoughts help or hinder the Psalmist as he struggles with despair and depression? Why?

6. What does the Psalmist describe in **Psalm 42:7**? How does **Psalm 88:7** and **Jonah 2:3** help to describe the overwhelming and tumultuous nature of the trial? What is the significance of the use of the pronoun 'Your' three times in this verse?

"The writer speaks of the overwhelming trials of his life, referring to them as waves and breakers that have swept over him. We do not know what these trials were, but we can imagine that they were the adverse circumstances that had borne him away from Jerusalem."

An Expository Commentary Psalms, Vol. 2 James Montgomery Boice, pg 369

7. In the midst of his expression of despair and discouragement, how does the Psalmist assert his faith in **Psalm 42:8**? What does he consider during the day, and what does he do at night?
8. How does the Psalmist exhibit strong faith and yet deep despair in **42:9-10**?
9. In **43:1-4**, the Psalmist begins to progress from his painful expression of lament in **Psalm 42** to prayer for deliverance and direction to walk in the truth which ultimately leads to worship and praise. What are important requests in this prayer to move the psalmist from an inward focus on his circumstances and feelings to a confident trust in the Lord?
10. Read again **Psalm 42:5**, **42:11** and the final verse **43:5**. The Psalmist asks the question of his soul, "Why so downcast". He answers his introspection of his soul with the truth of the Word, "Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God." a. When you are overwhelmed with discouragement, despair and lengthy difficulties, where do you turn? b. What will occupy your thoughts and your meditations when tempted to despair or give way to depression?
11. How did the following verses give you hope in dark times? What verses have you memorized to steady your mind when affliction comes your way?
- **Psalm 34:19**

 - **Psalm 62:1-2**

 - **Philippians 4:6-7**

"Is there a cure for depression? Yes. But it is not in us. It is in God. The cure is to seek God's face, so ours will not be downcast, which is what the psalmist does." An Expository Commentary Psalms, Vol. 2 James Montgomery Boice, pg 371