

GOING DEEPER
DISCUSSION GUIDE

GREAT EXPECTATIONS



February 16, 2014

Discussion Guide

Looking for love in all the wrong places

Psalm 16

Connecting:

45 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a way of connecting with one another so that you might partner in the work God is doing in your lives.)

- In what ways did God move in your life this week? In what ways did you respond to him?
- What was your biggest challenge this week? In what ways, if any, did you invite God into this challenge?
- How honest have you been with us? (Graciously thank group members for their honesty if they answer that they have held back.)

Getting Started:

10 minutes

- If you were stranded in a blizzard what would you need?

Diving Into the Text:

60 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- Use the notes to explain the context and background of Psalm 16 and the ideas of loneliness and fulfillment.
- Read Psalm 16 aloud slowly. Pause and read Psalm 16 aloud once more.

- David starts out by declaring that he is taking refuge in God, when have you been able to say something similar to God?
- In what ways, if any, might a trust in God alone to meet our needs be necessary in order to live submissively with others?
- Does expecting God to love you and provide for your needs seem easy or difficult for you? Could you elaborate?
- React to the following statement: When I am lonely I think that no one is with me or for me.
- Read Psalm 16 aloud slowly. Pause and read Psalm 16 aloud once more.
- In what ways does Psalm 16 give context for the submissive life?
- How might a person seek to have their personal needs met? How might these approaches be similar or dissimilar to what David describes? Could you elaborate?
- David speaks of others running after other gods. What gods are you most tempted to run after when you are lonely or unfulfilled?
- As you think about the movements in this psalm, what expressions seems to resonate most with where you are right now?
- What expression seems most distance or difficult to picture?
- What step might be helpful for you to take to hide yourself in God and keep your eyes on him? How do you think this might affect you living submissively with others? What, if anything, keeps you from taking this step?

Context and Background

Loneliness and fulfillment

We were meant to be fulfilled through love. Humanity is wired to be in an ongoing, interactive, experience of relationship with God and others. We were meant to live with God and receive his love in complete vulnerability and nakedness. Adam and Eve briefly experienced this completely meaningful and fulfilling relationship with God that we were meant for. Unfortunately, this intended experience did not last long because of the sin of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3). Their sin immediately changed their experience of relationship and love with God and each other. Relational distance and death entered the world, bringing about an experience of loneliness, in place of the fulfillment God intended for us. Ever since then, humanity has been completely dependent on God to initiate the restoring relationship with him that we were meant for.

Before going further, let's think about how we experience loneliness. You see loneliness comes as we experience distance or separation in relationship(s). This is caused both by not allowing others to come near, as well as the inability of others to completely be "with us" in all things. We experience loneliness when someone we cherish is literally at a distance geographically. We experience loneliness when someone we cherish withdraws from us in relationship. We even associate this loneliness with distance in the phrases we use: "I feel like you are at a distance," or "you are distancing yourself from me."

We often expect that marriage will magically cause two people to span the distance between each other and experience fulfillment in love. However, our relational needs far exceed the limitations of time and space that humans live in. Others, let alone one spouse, are not capable of completely knowing us and loving us at all times. God knew this about us,

and commanded us to pursue him first and foremost (Deut. 5:6). Throughout history others have experienced the truth of life and fulfillment coming in God alone (Ps. 16, Prov. 3:5-6). Jesus knew that life and fulfillment comes from a relationship with God and pointed to the need of pursuing God first and above all others (Mark 12:28-39). Paul also pointed to the deep love that God is providing for us in Romans 8, and also speaks about the fulfillment that is found in Christ alone in Philippians 3:7-11. In 1 John 4 we read that we are able to love because we have first received love from God. So, in marriage and in our relationships with others, a life of submission and love begins with the pursuit of God for all of our needs. As we pursue God, living our life with him, we will find that our needs are met. These needs may not be met immediately, and when that happens God seems to provide us strength for the next step. These needs may not be fulfilled as requested or expected, yet God is present and at work to leverage his infinite wisdom, love, and power to give us great good. So, our part in this is to open to him, and learn to allow him to come close. He is with us, but we can keep him at a distance. Our life with Him will be one of learning to submit and surrender to his love and presence, so that we can offer love and presence to our spouse and others.

The Text

Psalm 16

Our passage is found within the ancient prayer book and hymnal of the nation of Israel. The prayers and songs in the book of Psalms focus on God, as the Creator and king of all the earth. They reveal the thoughts and emotions of the writers, and portray that all emotions, thoughts, and experiences are to be offered to God. There are many different types of psalms within the book, some bursting forth with praise, others revealing great need or sadness. Throughout history,

and even today, many Christians daily use the psalms as an aid for their pursuit of living life with God. The psalms encourage a vulnerable and open communication with God, as well as point to the great benefits which are found in God alone.

This particular psalm, Psalm 16, is well known because of its content and form. It is quoted in the New Testament to point out how this psalm points to the fulfillment that was hoped for by David, yet delayed until Jesus. In the book of Acts, both Peter (a disciple of Jesus) and Paul (the 1st century missionary commissioned by Jesus) use this psalm to declare the fulfillment of God's promised provision in Jesus' defeat of death (Acts 2:25-31; 13:32-37). Psalm 16 is attributed to David. There is no definitive answer about the context in which David wrote this psalm. We find that this is a song of trust and confidence in the Lord. In the psalm we find a growing experience of the truth that God is the path to life and flourishing. At the beginning of the psalm we find someone who is acting like a refugee, pursuing shelter and declaring their desire for safety. Then, the expression progresses to delighting in God alone, and rejecting the pursuit of other gods. Next, thankfulness is expressed, as he experiences that all he needs comes from God, and that this provision is secure and faithful. By the end of the psalm the expression builds to one of joy, worship, and peace; the response of an heir, not a refugee. Because of this movement within the psalm, many have found that a particular expression within the psalm resonates and articulates their own current experience with God.

Application:

Most, if not all those entering marriage in our culture, expect that their spouse should be able to satisfy them in their experience of loneliness. As we have talked about in the past two weeks, the life with God is in contrast to this. The life with God puts on submission to God and others, in an attitude of humility. It seeks for the good of others, rather than trying to use them to meet their own needs. Marriage is no longer an experience to enter into trusting that another will serve you and meet your needs. Marriage is a part of a life opened to God so that he might meet one's needs. In this life with God, one can then serve their spouse while holding their needs out to God for fulfillment. In order to do this, we must make time to open up to God...both to communicate and become vulnerable with God, as well as to receive what he may or may not have for us in the moment. For some, a first step might include the use of The Journey on the back of the bulletin. For others, a next step might include times to not only speak, but also be quiet and listen before God.

Want to know how this looks in real life? Check out Bill's blog at billsprouse.blogspot.com



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