

Lesson 2

A Prayer of Longing for God

Psalm 63

Sometimes we feel separated from God. During these times, we may feel much like small children feel when they are separated from their parents—frightened, angry. And we may experience an intense longing for our parent to return.

Many things can create this sense of separation from God. It might come as a result of a loss or crisis in our lives which leaves us feeling forgotten or uncared for by God. It might come during a time of personal sin or failure when we struggle with fear that God might condemn or reject us. It might come as a result of being removed from our community of faith. Whatever the reason, a sense of separation from God can generate an intense longing for God.

Group Discussion Imagine, if you will, that we have two people doing what we will call “living sculptures.”

- Image one—two people standing with their backs to each other and their arms folded across their chests.
- Image two—one person turns to face the other’s back with their arms reaching out.
- Image three—the two are facing each other and they have their arms reaching out to each other.

What would it feel like to be each person in each image? What does it feel like to be separated? What does it feel like to be reconnected?

Personal Reflection. Think of a time when you felt especially close to God. What was the experience like for you?

This psalm helps us express our longing for God in times when we feel separated from Him. **Read Psalm 63.**

Longing: A strong desire for, or a yearning for.

Synonyms

Appetite, craving, desire, drive, hankering, passion, thirst, urge, yearning.

Discussion:

1. How does David’s present experience of God differ from his past experience (**vv. 1-2**)?
 - a. David is now on the run in the wilderness of Judah from his son Absalom (**2 Samuel 15—18 NKJV**). Previously he had been in the palace and near the sanctuary and had

everything he needed. He also had the company of other worshipers. Now, he is in the wilderness and not only experiences needs for food, water, and protection, but he has a longing for God.

b. **Psalm 42:1-2** also gives a description of “thirsting” for God.

2. The psalmist describes his experience of longing for God in **verse 1** with the strong physical metaphor of being thirsty in a desert with no sign of water. How is this image an appropriate description of what it feels like to be separated from God?
 - a. This metaphor might be seen in several ways. It is a metaphor of dying. It is a metaphor of intense suffering and longing. And it is a metaphor of a person with a single-minded focus—there is only one thing in all the world that a thirsty person in a desert wants.
 - b. We need God in the same way that we need water. They are basic to life. When we see no sign of God anywhere, we experience deep suffering and intense longing, and we might fear that something might happen to us.
 - c. **Note:** Even though David writes in **Psalm 139** about not being able to flee the presence of God, we can still feel as if we are separated from God.
3. In **verses 2 and 3** the psalmist describes how, in the past, he experienced God’s presence. What did he experience of God?
 - a. The psalmist felt closest to God when he was in the sanctuary—in the place of worship, with a community of believers.
 - b. Does the community of believers play a role in helping you experience a closeness to God?
4. **Verse 1** describes a soul that is thirsty, with no chance of finding water. In stark contrast, **verse 5** describes a soul that is satisfied with the richest of foods. In the Bible, marrow is the nourisher and strengthener of the bones. One of my Bibles defines marrow as the best, literally fat. It also defines fatness as abundance.

These pictures contrast the experiences of being separated from God and the experience of being close to God.

- a. What words or images would you use to describe times when you felt separated from God?
 - b. What words or images would you use to describe times when you felt close to God?
5. Because of his longing for connection with God, the psalmist says he will seek God, he will remember God, and he will cling to God. The first action he takes is to earnestly seek God (**v. 1**).
 - a. What does it mean to seek God?

