



Devotionals & Small Group Guide

“The Mailbox is Full at This Time”

April 14, 2024

Weekly Devotionals for April 15-20

Monday, April 15 Read Psalm 13

All of us have, at some time or another, felt like the psalmist here-lost and perhaps abandoned, certainly we sometimes feel like God isn't listening to us. How does the psalmist find hope in his situation and what might that say to us in our own dark times? What has God done in the past for you that helps you hang on?

Tuesday, April 16 Read Ezekiel 5:5-11

This is a scary prophesy, especially at v.11 where God promises to leave Israel. But note that it is Israel that left God long before (vv.6-7). Certainly when we feel God's absence it is not always because we have left and rebelled, but are there time when we have, perhaps unconsciously, separated ourselves from God? Yet note also that God does relent and offer grace and in Christ we have experienced the ultimate act of forgiveness. Are you feeling separated from God and if so, do you know why that might be? Talk to God about it in prayer today.

Wednesday, April 17 Read Luke 11:5-13

When our prayers are not answered we often feel as if God is ignoring us or perhaps is angry at us. Why does Jesus use a parental metaphor here (especially in vv.11-13) to encourage us to be persistent in our prayers? Think of times when someone has loved you enough to say “no” and reflect on times when God has responded the same way. How does that help you in moments when you feel you are not being heard or mistreated by God?

Thursday, April 18 Read Romans 8:18-25

Sometimes, even in our most faithful moments, we become frustrated that God doesn't seem to be acting fast enough or that He can't come to us soon enough. Paul agrees but reminds us that we need to persevere and trust that God's plan is unfolding. What do vv.24-25 mean to you right now? What sort of hope strengthens your faithfulness and your prayer life. Go back and read 8:1-6 to get a full picture of the basis for a hopeful life. How can you have hope in challenging times?

Friday, April 19 Read John 16:5-22

One way to make sense of God's seeming absence might be to reflect on it as a loving way to help us grow. Like learning to walk, sometimes a parent lets go of our hand, but is still there nonetheless. Reflect on this illustration as you read this passage, particularly at v.7. Note too at v.13 the guiding hand of the Spirit in our maturation. How would Jesus words at this time and later bring comfort to the disciples? What is he saying to you in this right now?

Saturday, April 20 Read Psalm 42

Before you read this, think of a time when you felt God had abandoned you or at least didn't feel as close as you wished. Now read the psalm and reflect on it as if it were your personal prayer in a time of challenge. How does it speak to you? What is God saying that you need to hear right now? How can you respond and deepen your relationship. Quietly listen for God's response to you.



Small Group Discussion & Study Guide

“The Mailbox is Full”

When God Seems Absent

Part I: Do I Have the Right Number?

1. **Read Psalm 13** Share: “All of us have, at some time or another, felt like the psalmist here-lost and perhaps abandoned, certainly we sometimes feel like God isn’t listening to us.” Discuss the following:
- How does the psalmist find hope in his situation and what might that say to us in our own dark times? What has God done in the past for you that helps you hang on?

2. **Read Ezekiel 5:5-11** Discuss the following:

- Why is God no longer listening to the Israelites here? In what ways might they be the ones who have severed their connection with God?
- While hopefully we have not so flagrantly rebelled against God ourselves, how might not aligning ourselves with God prayers? How solid is a relationship if it is only based on one party giving the other what they want when they want it? Why is that?
- Look at Sermon note #1. How does that statement relate to our discussions so far? Do you agree with it? Why or why not?

Part II. Can You Hear Me Now?

1. **Read Luke 11:5-13.** Share: “When our prayers are not answered we often feel as if God is ignoring us or perhaps is angry at us. Discuss the following:

- Why does Jesus use a parental metaphor here (especially in vv.11-13) to encourage us to be persistent in our prayers? Think of times when someone has loved you enough to say “no” and reflect on times when God has responded the same way. How does that help you in moments when you feel you are not being heard or mistreated by God?
- Look at sermon note 2A. Why does Jesus encourage us to be persistent in prayer. How does that help us and how does it shape our relationship with God?

2. **Read Psalm 42** Discuss the following:

- Look at Sermon note 2B. How does remembering what God has done in the past help dealing with challenges now? Be as specific as possible. If anyone in your group keep a prayer journal, are they willing to share why?
- List the things in your life that give you hope and confidence. Honestly, where does God fall in that list? How does regular communication enhance this confidence?

Sermon Notes from 4/14/24

“The Mailbox is Full” Luke 11:5-13

1. **Healthy prayer is less about understanding and more about experiencing God.**

“For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” -Romans 8:24-25

2. **What to do when God seems distant:**

A. Keep seeking.

“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” -Luke 11:9

B. Remember what God has done for you in the past.

“But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD’s praise, for he has been good to me.” -Psalm 13:5

C. Place hope in the goodness of God.

“Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” -Psalm 42:5