

## Savoring God's Word

### A Meditation on Psalm 30:1-12

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This meditation exercise on Psalm 30:1-12 is especially for those who sense God speaking to their deeper hurts. If you wish to have a group meditate on the passage together, the instructions for the group leader are in italics. If you wish to use it alone, ignore those instructions. This meditation roughly follows the pattern of *lectio divina*, but also includes elements from the Ignatian style of Scripture meditation. For more information about how to meditate on Scripture, see [Savoring God's Word](#) or the recording [Meditating on Scripture](#) (scroll to bottom of page).

### **WARMING UP** (5-10 minutes)

To prepare for this meditation, center yourself by breathing in and out several times. Relax your neck and then take time to let your muscles relax. Turn each distracting thought over to God. Ask yourself the following question to help focus your thoughts for meditation on today's passage. **In what ways does God lift us up?** Sit quietly for several minutes without worrying about coming up with a great insight. One simple word or phrase may come, or perhaps you can enjoy God's presence, knowing God has lifted you up many times.

*Group leader: After group members have had a chance to greet each other, read the centering instructions above. Then present the above "quiet question" and let them reflect quietly for a few minutes. Repeat the question and ask them to share their thoughts in a sentence or two. Anyone who wishes to pass may do so.*

### **READING the PASSAGE** (15-20 minutes)

Read silently the passage printed below, noting the explanations in the right column.

*Group leader: Ask a group member to read the passage below aloud. Suggest that other group members might want to close their eyes and listen.*

#### PSALM 30:1-12

1 A song. For the *dedication of the temple*. Of David.

#### HOW GOD RESCUED ME

I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the *depths* and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

2 O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me. 3 O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the *pit*.

#### ASKING OTHERS TO PRAISE GOD FOR THE RESCUE

4 Sing to the Lord, you *saints* of his; praise his holy name. 5 For his *anger lasts only a moment*,

#### ITALICIZED WORDS & PHRASES

**DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE** The site of the temple was the threshing floor of Araunah, where David had once built an altar to stop a plague on Israel (2 Samuel 24).

**DEPTHS** 70,000 Israelites had died from the plague, which had come upon Israel because of David's actions. God rescued David and the rest of Israel from this death.

**PIT** Pits were sometimes used as

but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

#### GOING OVER THE RESCUE AGAIN

6 When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken." 7 O Lord, when you favored me, you *made my mountain stand firm*; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed. 8 To you, O Lord, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy: 9 "What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness? 10 Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me; O Lord, be my help."

#### SUMMARY OF THE RESCUE

11 You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my *sackcloth* and clothed me with joy, 12 that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.

graves.<sup>1</sup>

**SAINTS** Those who are committed to God.

**ANGER LASTS ONLY A MOMENT** God's anger is not capricious, bad tempered or given to fits, but a dimension of his justice and fairness. Like the sting of a shot or the temporary discomfort of an operation, God's anger (justice) does its work quickly.

**MADE MY MOUNTAIN STAND FIRM** God made David feel secure.

**SACKCLOTH** In mourning, people tore their clothes and put coarse material around the waist next to the skin.

If you haven't read the notes in the right column, read them silently now. Take a minute to consider the following questions.

*Group leader: After the passage is read, ask group members to read silently the explanations in the right column and then to jot down answers to the questions below. After a few minutes, have them choose one question and share their answer to that question in a sentence or two. Or they may pass, if they wish. Explain that this is not a time for discussion, but for reporting responses to the questions.*

#### MOURNING INTO DANCING

1. The outline headings above show how David went over and over the events -- describing the rescue, asking others to celebrate it, summarizing it again. We do the same when miraculous things happen. Look through the psalm again and underline the things that God did. (For example, in verse one, he "lifted me out of the depths." If you have trouble finding more, look at verses 1, 2, 3, 7 and 11.)

2. Circle the things the Psalmist did when asking for help or felt he was in trouble. (For example, in verse 2, the Psalmist said he called for help.)

3. Which of the following gifts would you like to receive from God's hand?

- being lifted out of the depths
- experiencing God's mercy
- assured of His faithfulness
- feeling secure
- feeling spared
- having a heart that sings

4. Verses 1 and 2 indicate that when David was in his worst moment, he prayed. We've all prayed prayers of desperation, but how easy is it for you to pray honest prayers throughout your worst moments -- especially when the worst moment is your fault?

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<sup>1</sup>Vine, p. 178

- difficult because praying is the last thing I think about doing
- difficult because I can't be that honest with God
- easier than it used to be
- almost a first impulse
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

## PICTURING the PASSAGE (10-15 minutes)

Before reading the passage again, consider these cues.

### CHARACTER CUE: GOD & HIS ANGER

David mentions God's anger (vs. 5) and rightly so, for the plague was a part of David's punishment. What is God's anger like? "God's anger is not like man's anger. People often view God as a projection of their own personality. If, when you get mad, you want to punch people, you may assume God wants the same. If you sulk and turn anger inward, you may act as if God smolders at you.

"God's anger is different from man's anger: 'For I am God, and not man -- the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath' (Hosea. 11:9). God gets angry in response to human moral lapses, but He does not have temper tantrums. Unlike us, He manages to be fair even when He's angry. God delights in showing mercy, not in showing off His power in irrational, thoughtless actions (Micah 7:18)."<sup>2</sup>

### SETTING CUE: THE "PIT"

We don't know if David was on the brink of death himself, or if he believed he deserved death because the plague was a result of his actions. Either way, it's likely that with 70,000 deaths the pits he looked down into were mass graves. Even with relatives respectfully bringing their dead wrapped up, the sight must have been filled with weeping and a stench of death and disease. In this way, David looked into the face of death. It's riveting to think that he experienced God's mercy in such a full way during such terrible circumstances.

Now that you've looked at these cues, take a few minutes to quiet yourself again and read this passage aloud, using the above cues to picture David singing, dancing and experiencing joy.

*Group leader: Have group members read these cues silently. Then have a group member read the passage aloud while the others picture the passage.*

## SOAKING in the PASSAGE (5-15 minutes)

Consider how this passage touches your life today. Read it aloud again and ponder the following question for several minutes: **What word or phrase, dramatic scene or sound or smell emerges from the passage and stays with you?**

After a few minutes, write the word or phrase or images or scenes that resonate within you from the passage.

Word or phrase: \_\_\_\_\_

Scene: I hear . . . or, I smell . . . \_\_\_\_\_

*Group leader: Have a different group member read the passage aloud and then state the question printed in bold. Have the group quietly and then fill in one of the blanks above. After a*

<sup>2</sup>Jan Johnson, *Enjoying the Presence of God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1996), pp. 112-113.

*few minutes, ask group members to read what they've written. Remind them they may pass if they wish.*

## **PONDERING the INVITATION** (5-15 minutes)

Perhaps God is offering you an invitation in this passage to do or be or feel or realize something in the next few days. What might that be? Enjoy the silence for a few minutes, pondering this question: **What do I sense this passage is calling me to do or be or feel or realize?**

*Group leader: Read the above instructions aloud and after a few minutes, repeat the question printed in bold. Ask group members to respond by saying, I SENSE THIS PASSAGE CALLING ME TO: and then completing that statement with a short phrase. Anyone who wishes to pass may do so.*

## **PRAYING** (5-10 minutes)

Respond to God by telling him how you feel about what you sensed or didn't sense during this meditation. If you need to present questions to God, do so.

*Group leader: After allowing a few minutes for private prayer, ask group members to pray for the person on their left. Anyone wishing to pray silently may do so, saying, "I'm praying silently." When they're finished, they can say, "Amen."*

## **DAILY LECTIO:**

If you wish, use the above format to meditate on God's word between group meetings. You may wish to focus on today's passage everyday this week or use the following passages:

- Jeremiah 31:7-13 (a prediction of how God would bring Judah back and turn its mourning into gladness)
- Psalm 43:1-5 (asking God for light and truth in the midst of mourning)
- Isaiah 57:15-19 (from anger to healing)
- Luke 8:49-56 (Jesus mourning over and healing Jairus' daughter)
- James 4:7-10 (instructions for those who mourn)
- Revelation 21:2-7 (description of a time in which mourning, crying and pain will end)