



Week 29: Psalms 71-80

Study Guide for the week of July 13-19

Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, spend extra time with Ps 73.

Psalm 73 is a kind of summary of what the reader would have learned after reading the Psalms from Ps 1-72; list those things you have learned or had reinforced through your reading so far this summer.

Have you ever found yourself in the same position as the psalmist finds himself in Ps 73:3-12? Have you ever been tempted to think and act like the wicked who prosper? Have you ever felt like the way the “real world” seems to work makes your faith foolish? Reread Ps 73:13-14. Have you ever found yourself on the verge of losing your faith just as the psalmist finds himself?

Verse 17 is the turning point of the psalm – what changed the psalmist’s mind? Instead of focusing on the prosperity of the wicked, which the psalmist says is really stupid (Ps 73:21-22), what has the psalmist decided to focus on instead (Ps 73:23-26)?

The powerful witness to God’s presence and power in Ps 73 anticipates Paul’s affirmations of the same power and presence of God. Read Rom 8:39 and Rom 14:7-8. Paul, who was steeped in the scriptures (what we call the Old Testament), reiterates that God is the only necessity of life. Spend time in prayer asking God to help you live into that same vision.

Discussion starters

1. What clues does Ps 71 give you about the author (see Ps 71:9, 18)? How do you view your advancing age (because we all are aging everyday!)? Do you celebrate or ignore birthdays? Did you (or will you) celebrate or ignore your 7th birthday? 17th? 47th? 77th? What wisdom can you find in Ps 71:20-21? Is Ps 71 a challenge to our culture’s “cult of youth?” How could you live counter- culturally as the psalmist does?
2. Ps 72 is a prayer for Israel’s leaders. What is the leader’s focus supposed to be (Ps 72:2-4, 12-14)? What do leaders today seem to focus on? Consider leaders in all walks of life from politics to education to the church to your own sphere of influence. This week, pray for all our leaders by praying through Ps 72.
3. Ps 74 was likely written during the time of the Babylonian Exile (587-538 BC). What covenant promises did the psalmist want God to remember (Ps 74:20). [Hint: read Gen 12:1-3; Ex 20:1-21; 2 Sam 7:1-17]. Who actually forgot the covenant, God or the people? Who is actually the faithful party to the covenants?
4. Reread Ps 78 and identify the various stories the psalmist alludes to. How familiar are you with the stories in the Old Testament? Why is it important to learn, remember, and teach these ancient stories (Ps 78:7-8)?

Bible verse to memorize: Ps 73:23-24