

Psalm 125: A Song of Trust

Theme: As we ascend to the house to the Lord, we trust the Lord despite our feeling or circumstances.

Psalm 125

- 1 Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion. It cannot be shaken; it remains forever.
- 2 The mountains surround Jerusalem and the Lord surrounds his people, both now and forever.
- 3 The scepter of the wicked will not remain over the land allotted to the righteous,
so that the righteous will not apply their hands to injustice.
- 4 Do what is good, Lord, to the good, to those whose hearts are upright.
- 5 But as for those who turn aside to crooked ways, the Lord will banish them with the evildoers.
Peace be with Israel.

Icebreaker: Have each member of the group answer the following questions. These questions allow the conversation to start off in safety and fun.

- Who is one of your favorite villains? Why do you like them?
- Why are villains essential in the development of a hero?
- What makes a hero good and a villain evil?

Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father, unshakable and eternal, help us to understand this week's psalm. Not simple to understand it in our head, but to feel in our heart and to live in in our lives. May it reframe our story and reshape our perspective as we walk with you and ascend to your house. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Opening Quote by Eugene Peterson

Singing Psalm 125 is one way Christians have to develop confidence and banish insecurity.

Opening Meditation: Listening Prayer

At the start of the session, you will read through Psalm 125 three times. You can use the version above (Christian Standard Bible), another version, or three different versions.

Have your group sit and listen. Invite them to listen for a theme in this Psalm. Listen for repeated phrases that are echoed in this psalm. Listen for words or ideas that resonate with them. Listen for God to speak to you through this psalm.

Discuss:

- What was something that you heard, felt, or experienced while listening to this psalm?
- Were there any word or phrase that resonated with you in this Psalm?
- What do you think is the central theme or message from this psalm?
- Did you sense any connection between this psalm and other scripture?
- What questions about this psalm came to mind as you listened?

Sermon Discussion: This past Sunday we explored Psalm 125 in worship. Take some time to review the sermon, discussing the themes, application, and questions

- What were some of lessons of Psalm 125 that were discussed during the sermon?
- How did these lessons connect with you and your spiritual life?
- How were you encouraged to apply the lessons from this psalm to your life?
- Share any questions or concerns that came to you from this week's sermon?
- How can the lessons from this Psalm help you on your spiritual journey?

Psalm 125 is a song of trust, but not a blind trust. It acknowledges that trust is formed in a life of faith as it overcomes obstacles. The psalmist points out three obstacles to faith that keeps us from trusting God. They are being shaken (vs 1), observing wickedness (vs 3), and turning away (vs 5). When we allow these obstacles to overtake us, our faith falters and our trust dwindles.

Have you ever...

- Have you ever been shaken in your faith?
- Have you ever questioned God's goodness when observing wickedness and injustice?
- Have you ever willfully decided to turn away from following God?

Invite group to share their experiences in these three obstacles and how that effected their spiritual journey.

From A Long Obedience in the Same Direction:

The emphasis of Psalm 125 is not on the precariousness of the Christian life but on its solidity. Living as a Christian is not walking a tightrope without a safety net high above a breathless crowd, many of whom would like nothing better than the morbid thrill of seeing you fall; it is sitting secure in a fortress. The psalm uses familiar geography to demonstrate the truth.

Jerusalem was set in a saucer of hills. It was the safest of cities because of the protective fortress these hills provided. Just so is the person of faith surrounded by the Lord. Better than a city wall, better than a military fortification is the presence of the God of peace. Geographically the city of Jerusalem had "borders and bulwarks of extraordinary variety and intricacy" 1 which illustrated and enforced the reality of God's secure love and care.

City life in the ancient world was dangerous. The outside world was filled with roaming marauders, ready to attack at any sign of weakness. Constant vigilance was a prerequisite for community life and for the development of the arts of civilization. Cities needed elaborate and extensive defense systems to make them safe. Immense effort was expended on building walls and digging moats.

We still live in that kind of world, and we still build those defenses although the forms have changed somewhat. The process is not only political but personal. The outer world is only an extension of an inner, spiritual world. Psychologists who observe us talk of the elaborate security systems (Sullivan) and the defense mechanisms (Freud) that we use to protect ourselves.

People of faith have the same needs for protection and security as anyone else. We are no better than others in that regard. What is different is that we find that we don't have to build our own: "God is a safe place to hide, ready to help when we need him" (Ps 46: 1) . "Mountains encircle Jerusalem, and GOD encircles his people." We don't always have to be looking over our shoulder lest evil overtake us unawares. We don't always have to keep our eyes on our footsteps lest we slip, inadvertently, on a temptation. God is at our side . He is, as another psalmist put it, "behind and before" (see 139:5). And when it comes down to it, do we need anything more than our Lord's prayer for us: "Holy Father, guard them I'm not asking that you take them out of the world I But that you guard them from the Evil

One" (Jn 17: 11, 15)? With a prayer like that offered to the Father on our behalf, are we not secure?

Discuss:

- How did the mountains surrounding Jerusalem offer protection for the city?
- How did the mountains surrounding Jerusalem illustrate God's protection for those who trust in Him?
- How does trusting God offer us security that the world cannot provide?
- How have you seen security from trusting in God in your life?

Quote by Eugene Peterson

One threat to our trust comes from feelings of depression and doubt. The person of faith is described in this psalm as "a rock-solid mountain . . . nothing can move it." But I am moved. I am full of faith one day and empty with doubt the next. I wake up one morning full of vitality, rejoicing in the sun; the next day I am gray and dismal, faltering and moody. "Nothing can move it"?-nothing could be less true of me. I can be moved by nearly anything: sadness, joy, success, failure. I'm a thermometer and go up and down with the weather.

- Is it hard to believe that someone like Eugene Peterson, who authored the Message translation, would be shaken in his faith?
- Do you resonate his struggle? Do you find it encouraging that you are not the only one who struggles with trust issues?

Peterson writes that "Discipleship is a decision to live by what I know about God, not by what I feel about him or myself or my neighbors." So often our feelings and perception of experiences cause us to lose trust in God and we try to rely on ourselves and our own understanding. As Proverbs 3:5 tells us, Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding.

- Why do we tend to rely on feelings instead of the facts of faith?
- How do our feelings and understanding cause us to lose trust in God?

Psalm 125 is a song of trust in the security of Christ and not our feelings or circumstances. We sing this song to remind our spirits that we can trust in the Lord no matter what comes our way. As we sing this song, we remember that God surrounds and protects us (vs 2), that God does good to the upright (vs 4) and reprimands the evildoers (vs 5), and that trusting God leads to peace (vs 5).

Optional Musical Interlude: Listen to Psalm 125 by Poor Bishop Hooper, reflecting on the words and music, allowing God to speak through this psalm into your heart.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nBDdwxXc-c

Quote: Eugene Peterson

Psalm 125 says that being a Christian is like sitting in the middle of Jerusalem, fortified and secure... We are secure. God is running the show. Neither our feelings of depression nor the facts of suffering nor the possibilities of defection are evidence that God has abandoned us.

Discuss:

- What does it look like to trust in the Lord, as opposed to feeling or circumstances?
- Which promise from Psalm 125 do you need to hold on to this week, God protects, does good, or brings peace?
- What can be done to remember that you (we) are secure because “God is running the show?”
- How can this group help each other trust God and support each other?

Final Thoughts: From Timothy Keller’s *The Songs of Jesus* (pg 331)

Endurance. In ancient times, there was no more militarily secure position for a city than to be behind encircling mountains. Trusting in God is like being in a mountain fortress. How? Trusting God provides a superior vantage point. It helps us see our own sin and see that wickedness only pays in the short term. Trusting God is also the way to eventually get breathtaking sights of God himself. When Isaiah saw the Holy One, high and lifted up (Isaiah 6:1-8), it permanently changed his view of everything. Most of all, trusting God means connecting yourself to the one person who will endure forever, Jesus. And that means you will endure as well. In a world in which seemingly everything changes and nothing lasts, fix your mind on that.

Application: When you are feeling shaken, overwhelmed by the world, or wanting to turn your back on God, remember your feelings are fickle. Share your struggles with a trusted friend and surround yourself with God’s world, sing Psalm 125!

Reflect:

- What is something you discovered today during our study of Psalm 125?
- How will this psalm help you through life’s journey this week and beyond?
- How can you apply this psalm to your life this week?
- How can you support the people in your group as they journey through Psalm 125?

Closing Prayer: Invite the group to share any prayer requests for the week ahead. Then have one person close in prayer or invite the group to pray for each other.