



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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Songs For The Workplace 2/6
HG135: A Song For Miserable Mondays

Psalm 5:1-12

Home Group Study Notes

22 January 2017 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Would your work colleagues notice a difference in you if they saw you on a Sunday morning? Would those who worship with you on a Sunday notice a difference if they saw you on a Monday morning?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



Songs For The Workplace 2/6
HG135: A Song For Miserable Mondays

Psalm 5:1-12

Home Group Sermon Notes

22 January 2017 - Pauline Woolnough

Introduction Psalm 5 has been chosen as one that will help us cope with Miserable Mondays on our series on Songs for the Workplace. Unlike David our lives may not be in danger as a result of our occupations but the workplace can be challenging and we can face problems and sometimes find ourselves the victim of gossip and personal attacks but He is the same God who can help us when our lives are threatened or when work threatens to squeeze the joy out of life and if we turn to him and ask for his help he can transform our attitude and our situations.

David was under attack, his enemies were mounting another campaign against him and he was going through some very tough and dark times. We don't know exactly when David wrote Psalm 5 and to what particular crisis he is referring to but it may have been about the time his son Absalom turned against his father with the intention killing him and making himself king. He had to flee, go into hiding and reflect on the enmity of a son he loved, in despair he turned to God and poured out his heart. David was often under attack and he fought many battles. We know that being a Christian does not exempt us from battles and ours may involve criticism and personal attacks. The workplace can be a breeding ground for treachery, gossip and scheming and it is sometimes a difficult place to remain true to our beliefs and not retaliate in a like manner against those attacking us. It's not necessarily wrong to defend ourselves but it requires God's wisdom to know when to speak out and when to stay quiet and we have to be sure that what we do is in a gracious Christ like manner. Often when someone accuses us we tend to try and think of a better insult to hurl back at them in order to make us feel better. David doesn't do that here and if Psalm 5 tells us anything it tells us that when we are under attack, or when we are having a tough time, the best thing we can do is take refuge in the Lord and let him defend us. David took his complaint to the Lord in honest, persistent, expectant prayer.

Manner of Prayer David starts off by saying to the Lord, "*Give ear to my words, consider my sighings*" reflecting what Paul meant in Romans 8:26 when he said "*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.*" There are 2 kinds of prayer, the one that is expressed in words and the one that is simply uttered longings expressed in silent meditation and anguish, when our need is so great that the pain we feel overtakes us and expresses itself in honest wordless cries of help to the Lord.

4: God hates it when people attack His children so can you take heart from this? How can this strengthen your perseverance?

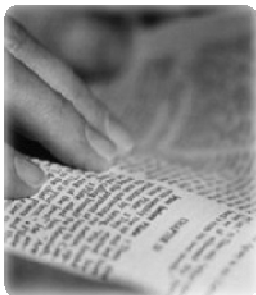
5: In the workplace in times of uncertainty and difficulty, do you always seek God's help and guidance or do you tend to rely on your education, skills or experience?

6: Use verses 11-12 to pray about the problems and temptations that you face in the workplace:

Let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favour as with a shield.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Why is it important to start the day with prayer, how does this set the tone for the rest of the day?

2: Should we as Christians take pleasure or be grieved at the thought of God judging our enemies?

3: Gossip is a form of slander, a form of evil and sin. We can rationalise it and rename it “*sharing*” but what does God think about it and how can we guard against it?

Words are simply not enough and only the Holy Spirit can interpret for us what we really want to say. C.H. Spurgeon said of Romans 8:26 that “*the groaning which cannot be uttered are often the prayers which cannot be refused.*” David uses both kinds of prayer, he craves a hearing when he says, “*Give ear to my words,*” v1 and he asks God to consider his sighings. He has voiced his concerns and expressed his pain to the Lord then he relies on the Holy Spirit who groans on his behalf to present his case to the Lord for Him to consider.

The Urgency of Prayer He prays in words, in sighs and groans before God, *his* King and *his* God. David may have been king but he knew that he served under a far greater King, the Lord God and he was crying out to Him for help. He didn't always spend time thinking of the right things to say or frame his words in a controlled, restrained manner he just cried out to God honestly in his pain. God knows everything about us, so it's useless trying to hide our feelings from Him. However when he says in v3 “*I lay my request before you*”..... or “*I direct my prayer to you*” the Hebrew meaning of the word “*direct*” describes the wood and pieces of the sacrifice being laid on the altar in a specific order meaning, that David is presenting his prayer before God in an orderly fashion just as the priest lays out the morning sacrifice. He is praying in a manner that is acceptable for God to consider then he will wait and look for the answer. In our lack of preparation and failure to spend time in quiet stillness or meditation we miss out on the opportunity to engage with the Lord and of course a lack of expectation, waiting and looking for answers can mean that the power of prayer escapes us.

V3 may have the potential to divide us when David says, “*in the morning, O Lord you hear my voice, in the morning I lay my requests before you.*” “*In the morning ... in the morning ...*”. One of the ways the Hebrews emphasise something is by repeating it. If they say it once, they mean it but if they say it twice, they really mean it, saying it three times means it is ultimate, like “*holy, holy, holy is the Lord,*” which means that He is ultimate in holiness. So the fact that David repeats “*in the morning*” here shows the emphasis that he put upon it. It was “*in the morning*” that his prayer would rise up to God.

Some of us easily get up in the morning, we are bright, cheerful and full of the joys, for some of us David's example of morning prayer is one that offers no great challenge. David rose early to pray and in Mark 1:35 we see that Jesus kept this same pattern: “*And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there.*” Others of us find mornings difficult, but if we have something important to do we can get up early to do it, e.g. the early morning round of golf, or to catch an early flight for our holiday...if we want something badly enough we can get up early, how important is our time spent alone with the Lord? The thing is not to make it a religious routine where we do it for the sake of doing it. We need to cultivate a habit of prayer where we are always in communion with the Lord, where before we kneel to pray we are already praying. Our prayers should be like a well stoked fire that glows in the hearth rather than hot sparks and flames that flare up and then die and go cold.

Persistency of Prayer The emphasis on the repetition is David's persistence. You may know from your own experience of going to sleep with a worry on your mind or perhaps the dread of going back to work on a Monday after the weekend only to wake in the morning and the reality hits you, yes you do have to get up and go to work and at this time of year its worse isn't it? Its dark, you have to scrape the ice off the car window or stand in the cold waiting for a train held up due to ice on the rails. As the day stretches ahead of you with dread filling up your thoughts it's then like David that you need to turn to God personally and with persistence. In vs4-6 David appeals to God as a righteous Judge, pleading with him to "*Declare them guilty.*" v10. He reasons that since his enemies are so evil, a righteous God will act on his behalf. We know that God hates evil, we often say that he hates the sin but loves the sinner but vs4-5 tell us that he hates "*all who do wrong,*" and he "*takes no pleasure in evil.*" V4. No matter how respectably we dress it up or justify its necessity, God abhors evil and those involved in it.

In the workplace, the colleague attacking you behind your back angers your Father who is on your side. The injustice of being overlooked for that promotion you were best suited for, losing your job, being excluded from the so called in crowd, being ridiculed for your beliefs, these things anger your Father who is on your side and who hates injustice of any kind. When you are the victim of injustice whether it be in the workplace or anywhere else take the problem to the Lord knowing that he hates injustice, take refuge in him, make Him the first Person you pour out your heart to then trust Him to fight your corner and wait to see how he does it.

David approached the Lord with confidence saying "*but I by your great mercy will come into your house*" Vs7. He places himself in amongst the righteous which could seem a bit arrogant or presumptuous of him as there was much in David's life that was anything but righteous. There was his adultery with Bathsheba and his involvement with the death of her husband Uriah but David's heart belonged to God. He bowed to God's authority and he knew that it was only by God's mercy that he could go into God's house. He didn't trust in his own righteousness to approach God and neither can we. We can only come into His presence by His grace as we trust in Christ. However as we appeal to God to bring justice and we condemn those attacking us we still need to examine our own hearts. They may be acting unjustly, being unfair or malicious, they may be boastful or hateful or dishonest, they may gossip about me behind my back, but what about me? Is my behaviour beyond reproach, are my actions always fair, am I Christ like in the ways I respond to critics? Am I the same on Monday to Friday as I am on a Sunday morning? We must guard at all times that evil does not find a home in our hearts but as God's children having claimed sonship through the death of his Son we are made righteous because of Him and as such are entitled and invited into the Father's presence. It is only by grace that can we enter and that knowledge should prevent us from keeping away and entertaining the foolish arrogant thoughts that can tell us we are not good enough to go into His presence. We are not now and never will be good enough on our own merits so let's not fall into sin by thinking our entry has anything to do with us, it hasn't, it is all about Jesus. David knew he was in need of mercy and on the basis of God's mercy he could approach Him recognising that the only posture for a sinner like himself was to "*bow in reverence,*" v7.

Pray Expectantly David said that he would wait for his answer but in these days of instant everything how hard do we find waiting? David prays persistently and then waits. Is that how you pray sometimes, always, never? We all know prayers can go unanswered for a long time but time spent in prayer over what can sometimes be years is feeding our souls and developing and enriching our relationship with God so don't give up. He is *our* King he is *our* God he is *our* Father and we can expect him to listen and respond to our needs so take refuge in him and wait for your answer. He is the perfect Father in whose image we are made and whose parenthood we sometimes catch a glimpse of in that of our own attempts at parenthood. David is a great example.

Despite Absalom's treason and treachery David wanted no harm to come to him because no matter how much he plotted and turned the people against him, David loved him and would have forgiven Absalom anything and he was distraught when he found out his son had been killed. His love for his son helps us to see how God loves his children. We cannot be capable of loving more than God loves, his very nature is to love and that fact more than any other should thrust you into his presence to lay before him your concerns be it those you are up against in the workplace or anywhere else. God loves you and with words, groanings and sighings bring your worries to him. Pray that he will keep you on the righteous path (5:8) and that God will protect you from *becoming like* the wicked. Like David's critics yours would love to see you stumble and fall, so that they could have more ammunition to throw at you and give them occasion to mock our God. So ask God to show you and lead you His way.

Conclusion I have had many miserable Mondays, (and Tuesdays and Wednesdays) in the workplace and the only way I knew to make them better was to invite the Lord to go with me and to ask for his help with problems I faced so it has always amazed me when Christian friends have shared their workplace problems with me and I have always asked, "*have you prayed about it*" the answer has invariably been, "*no.*" It's as if we think that He is not interested or wanting to be involved in this huge area of our lives, it's quite ridiculous. So I urge you like David, as soon as you rise turn to God and pour out your heart to him, pray over your workstation, pray for your colleagues, your clients and customers, pray especially for those who oppose you and like David love them, above all remember that Our God is sovereign over our lives 7 days a week and when you approach him looking for protection help and refuge you will find that he will help and defend you, "*For surely O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favour as with a shield.*" God hears our prayers the same way as he heard David's and the most encouraging and powerful way we can pray is like David, and to look upon Him as our King and our God.

Emmanuel Text for 2017

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14