



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 6/6 HG139 A Song For Fantastic Fridays

Psalm 65:1-13

Home Group Study Notes

19 March 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

What was the atmosphere like in your place of work on a Friday? Was it different from Monday to Thursday? If so, why do you think that was?



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 ...



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Home Group Sermon Notes

19 March 2017 - Pauline Woolnough

Introduction

The theme of Psalm 65 is God's abundant provision, how we should be mindful of his blessings and give him the praise, thanks and honour he deserves. The people of Israel attributed their year of plenty to God. They gathered to thank him for a good year's harvest and look forward to renewed blessings in the year to come. In Biblical times success depended heavily on how much rainfall there had been. This year the rain had come and it had been a good one. Psalm 65 is one of the most exuberant in the book and can be divided into 3 sections. Vs 1-4 speak on the Pardon of God, vs 4-8 about the Power of God and vs 9-13 the Provision of God.

It starts off with V1 saying *"Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion."* Biblical scholars say that the expression *"Praise awaits you"* is a difficult phrase to translate from Hebrew to English. Other bible versions such as the Living Bible say *"O God in Zion, we wait before you in silent praise,"* the amplified bible says *"To You belongs silence, and praise in Zion, O God."* When we think of praise we tend to think of sung praise or at least of us speaking out words of worship to God but here what it literally means is *"To you, silence [is] praise"*; and implies to fall silent before God. Here the people stand before God and as they reflect on the wonder and majesty of his presence there are no words worthy of their appreciation so they stand there in awe, silently expressing their gratitude. Their silence leads them into a deeper experience where they acknowledge his goodness and prepare to shower him with praise for his wonderful works. They knew that God worked alongside them rewarding their efforts and as they worked in partnership and in relationship with him, He blessed their work, they couldn't do it without him. The future was not an unknown for them, their confidence was in God and so they stood, waiting on Him in silence until they could keep quiet and hold their praise in no longer when at last they would burst out in joyful worship.

The Pardon of God

David lists here some of the many reasons we have to praise God. The first reason is mentioned in v 2 *"You who answer prayer, to you all people will come."* The first thing we can be thankful for especially on those days when everything goes wrong is that God knows about it. He knows our every move, thought, joy and fear and he hears our prayers. He is the God who answers prayer, which is a whole study in itself, but all we need to remember is that there is no prayer that he does not listen to and no prayer that he is not considering right now and how he will answer it.

4. When you have a good day or year how do you explain the success to yourself and to others?

5. Knowing God matters more than any success in the workplace. In Luke 10 17-20 what gave the disciples joy, and what does Jesus say should give them/us joy?

6. David was *"a man after God's heart"* and throughout his life he was always *"after God's own heart."* Would the same be said about you? In what ways can David be a role model for us?



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. Have you ever been struck dumb by the sheer awesomeness of God's presence? Share any experiences you have had.

2. How much do/did you involve God in your work?

3. When was the last time you had a fantastic Friday (or any other day) at work?

The psalm expands on our reasons for worship when in v 3 David says *"When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions."* Here is our fundamental problem and the real reason we have to be thankful. Even before the coming of Christ the people understood what it was God was doing for them. They recognised that their sins were condemning them and God was making atonement for them and although this was a culture where animals were sacrificed to appease God, David did not say that it was the animal sacrifices that atoned for their sins. He understood that it was God Himself who was covering their sins and it was God who forgave them. In doing so the people could come near to him. V 4 *"Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple."* The people understood that God lived among them in the tabernacle and when they lived near to him his provision and blessings flowed.

Work is often the one place that God is excluded from our lives, it's as if we leave him at the door outside the office and then catch up with him again as we leave. Probably more so if we have been doing the same job for years and feel that there is little more we can learn about it. We are self sufficient in that area of our lives. That may be true but I promise you it is far better and more rewarding when we allow him to work alongside us. Too often we compartmentalise our lives, and we put different areas of our lives into separate boxes a bit like the rooms in our homes and what can happen is that we allow God into some of those rooms but not into others. We'll let him into the kitchen and living room but the study is out of bounds so to speak but if we want to experience all that God has in store for us it's far better to invite God into everything we do. Only then will we see him move and bless us in those areas of our lives that he is so often excluded from such as work and come Friday we can look back and see where he has been working with us and thank Him. We can bring to him the issues that concern us to take into the next week and we can look forward to the weekend knowing we can trust him to help us through any situation whether its in the workplace or anywhere else. Sadly although some are wiling to say they need help, God is literally the last place they think of going after exhausting all other sources.

The Power of God

Verses 5-8 describe the power of God and mentions two specific displays of His strength and might, - mountains and roaring seas. Its not difficult be overawed and impressed at the sight of a spectacular mountain range. Just looking at them can feed our souls and lift our spirits. Their size and splendour make us feel small, they are hard, solid and immovable. We in our own strength cannot move mountains yet, here in our psalm God creates them. Channel 4 is showing a programme called "Mutiny" about Mutiny on the Bounty and today's attempt by a handful of men trying to retrace Bligh's journey in the same kind of boat. Watching this little boat alone in an immense wilderness of water in stormy weather being tossed about by massive powerful unforgiving waves is terrifying and surely more than anything shows the awesome power and might of our God. Yet if we cast our minds back to a story of another storm and some terrified men in a boat shouting out to their master to do something, we remember Jesus sound asleep, unconcerned, confident in the care of his father but in order to stop the rising panic in the boat, he speaks to the storm and calms the sea. (Mark 4:35-41.)

The power of God is immense, mighty and awesome and yet the gentle lapping of waves against the shore is soothing and can remind us of his tenderness.

The Provision of God

Finally Vs 9-13 remind us that God is the God of plenty and David begins by giving a description of nature and things that we can take for granted. He sends the rain, he fills the rivers, he waters the fields, he provides food for the flocks which provide food for the people and so on. He provides all that the earth needs to bring forth crops and feed all its inhabitants, we just don't manage it fairly or appropriately. So often we only look at the bad things going on in the world, we see wars, famine, the rise of crime, economic problems and we forget about the God of Grace.

A good definition of grace is *“Grace is everything for nothing to those who don't deserve anything.”* God doesn't just give some things to some people in return for some things they have given him, he gives absolutely everything in return for absolutely nothing to absolutely everybody. The same rain falls on those who believe in Him and on those who don't. The same sunshine and beauty and abundance is made available to all but once we come to know, accept and love his Son Jesus Christ as our Saviour then the floodgates are open, you can have the world but there is more. However if we don't look for signs of his presence in our own lives and that are there in nature everywhere we look and if we don't ask him for his help with the things that trouble us then we will be missing out some of the blessings he has and wants to shower us with

What about those days that are not so good then, what about those people who don't have jobs, whose crops fail because the rain hasn't come, what about the people starving to death because of famine? Regardless of what we see when we look around in the material world, God meets our every need. Our greatest need is spiritual and he meets that need in Jesus. You may not have everything you want, but if you know Jesus as your Saviour you have everything you need. Today the world produces enough food to feed everyone. Despite a 70 percent population increase there is enough food in the world to feed us all yet an estimated 925 million people worldwide are still undernourished. It is Poverty—not food availability—that is the major driver of food insecurity. In other words the haves – have and the don't haves – don't! According to a new report published by Oxfam eight men own the same wealth as the 3.6 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity, so we cannot blame God for the fact that 925 million people are undernourished. He has provided – but human beings just don't share it!

Conclusion

David reminds us of just how much God has abundantly blessed us and urges us to see all that we have as blessings from Him. He has created a world that despite all the careless ways we treat it, the planet we live on has the ability to sustain life and remain productive even when scientists say we are destroying it. God has provided a home for us rich in diversity and with unending variety and we are able to look at the mountains and the vast oceans and know that his power is in the world, and if his power can so easily create mountains and control vast oceans how much more can he deal with the problems we face.

Nature, regardless how impressive and daunting, is under the control of God and by mentioning these great forces of nature David wants to remind us to look around and see what God has done and then to remember that the same God wielding the same power that created mountains and oceans is working for us in all areas of our lives. Matt 10.29 says *“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.”* If your Father knows the whereabouts of every little bird how much more does he know about what is going in in your life. So Praise Him!!

Do you want your Fridays to be fantastic, do you want every other day to be just as good? It starts with the awesome realisation that tells us who God is and who we are and the belief that God has plans for us, and he is looking for our willingness to become part of those plans. I hope that through your study, reflection and discussions the knowledge that we all have but sometimes forget will have been reinforced, and that is that things are always better with God at the centre of our lives be it in the workplace or anywhere else. We will all have good days and bad days tempting us to question where he is and what he is doing in our lives but good and bad days will count as nothing compared to what we can thank him for when we look forward to the abundance of his promised new creation. We all fall short of God's standards and his holiness but rather than punish us and exclude us from his presence he made atonement for our sins and the price was the sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ. Surely there are no words that can possibly express our thanks for what he has done for us in Jesus. So Praise Him again!!!

I also hope you will feel encouraged by the author of our studies, David himself, who as Paul said in Acts 13:22 *“God testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’* It begs the question, how could God still call David a man after His own heart when he committed such terrible sins, including adultery and murder? David was a man after God's own heart because he was committed to following him. His faith was tested, and he failed miserably at times but once he sinned he sought and received the Lord's forgiveness.

David loved God and he sought to follow him. He openly declared his need of God as we see from the songs he wrote such as when he says in psalm 130:5 *“I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope,”* and in Ps 42 1-2 *“As the deer pants for streams of water so my soul pants for you, my God, My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”* David knew he could accomplish nothing without God's help and as a result he was forever in pursuit of *God's own heart*. As a man after God's own heart, David is a role model for all of us.

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