

## **Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides**

**June 18th**

**Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)**

1. What is your favorite ice cream flavor? If you were to invent your own icecream flavor, what would it be?

### **Bible Study Questions**

1. When was a time when you most questioned God's goodness? (this may be a very sensitive question so give people freedom not to share if it is too painful). How did you process that time?
2. Read Psalm 88
  - What can you gather about the author's situation?
  - What seems to be his attitude toward God?
  - What emotions were you able to identify with?
3. This Psalm teaches that one can walk with God and yet experience times of deep extended darkness. Why is that so hard for us to rationalize with a belief in a good and loving God?
  - Why do you think that God allows us to go through those times?
4. How would you imagine God responding to this kind of prayer? What does the inclusion of a prayer like this in Scripture tell you about the character of God? How does this impact the way that you pray?
5. God created laments as a way for people to appropriately process their pain. How does praying a prayer like this help in a grieving process?
6. In the church, we spend a lot of time celebrating but little time on lament. How do help create a culture in which lament is an acceptable form of worship?

**June 18th**  
**Psalms of lament**

Many of us wish that life was like a tv show in which any conflict is easily resolved within a 30 minute or 60 minute time span. However, many of us experience deep and extended times of darkness. Laments, are over 50 prayers in the book of Psalms that help us navigate those times of darkness.

- I. Psalm 88: The Psalm of Despair:** Psalms 88 is one of two prayers that do not end on a hopeful note. It is considered the darkest Psalm in the collection.
  - a. Cry for salvation out of extreme distress:** The setting is someone crying out to God in a position of approaching death and abandonment. Notable is the word “cry” that appears multiple times in the prayer. The Hebrew conveys an escalation of emotion. It begins with one who begs out of anguish (verse 1). In verse 9, it has moved to yelling. By verse 13, the crying has advanced to a series of screams.
  - b. Sense of neglect and abandonment from God:** The author accuses God of placing him in this situation and neglecting his salvation (v. 6-8, 14)
  - c. Concludes with exhaustion and surrender:** In the end, the crying ceases. He seems to just be out of energy and surrenders to his situation. “darkness is my closest friend (v. 18).”

**II. What do we do with this?**

- a. The Christian life can include extended periods of deep darkness.** When we go through these times, we often wonder if God is punishing us. Yet this Psalm was written by a Godly man who has experienced deep suffering. You can walk with God and experience the dark night of the soul. God. God always has a purpose in it, but he doesn't always reveal that.
- b. God gives voice to our pain, fears, and doubts:** God inspired the author to publish this prayer and placed it within his Holy Scriptures. In doing so, he gave us a guide to authentically express ourselves to him in times of suffering. His very presence is an invitation for us to do so.
- c. Lament is a proper response in the midst of hardships:** In times of hardship, prayers of laments are given as a form of healing. Instead of suppressing their emotions, they cause

us to appropriately express them and to find God's healing in the midst of that.

- d. We look to the bigger picture of Scripture to find hope:** Psalm 88 ends in despair, but it is only a part of a bigger picture. In John 1:5, it talks about Jesus being the light that “shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” Jesus came into our darkness, experiencing the same suffering that we experience. He then triumphed over it through his resurrection. We can live with the confidence that darkness is not the end of the story, but that God will bring deliverance and we will experience the joy of a future resurrection.