

Group Gathering Question:

What is something funny or positive that has happened to you or your family during this last month under the stay at home order?

Read this week's scripture and discuss:

1. Verses 1 and 2 speak of oppression. We know Jewish people have felt oppression from rulers during Bible times up through the Holocaust and even anti-Semitism today. Have you ever felt oppressed? How do the Jewish people (or how do we) find freedom even during oppression?
2. Reading verses 3 and 4 again, what does that kind of suffering make you feel like? What might God do for the Psalmist and do for us?
3. How and when have you known the Lord's blessing in your life?
4. What is one area of your life's journey where you have persevered and achieved your goals? Why do you think you were able to persevere and achieve those goals?
5. Is there one area of your spiritual journey that you have tried to get better at, but have struggled? Why do you think that you have not been able to persevere in this area? What's the one thing you might try to do differently (e.g. be in touch with someone who has persevered in this area, don't focus on being perfect, etc.) in order to increase your likelihood of success?

prayer requests

- > Prayers of healing for Carly Bias, Gabrielle Carnell, Carver McGriff, Robert Neal, Nanette Ritter, and Mike Witter.
- > Prayers of comfort for the family of Dottie Strawn, who passed away this week.
- > Prayers for health care workers, truck drivers, grocery stores workers, and others taking risks to provide service and care.
- > Prayers for Food Pantry volunteers and clients as well as those who have lost their jobs.

This Psalm of Ascent (a Psalm that the people would sing on the way to worship) speaks of oppression and suffering. God teaches us and encourages us through our suffering. This unique time of pandemic around the world might teach us much about persevering in suffering. May we maintain our focus and dependence on God in the midst of uncertainty, disease, job loss, fear and concern for ourselves and others.

Group gathering question: Do take a moment and share a funny or positive story. It is good to still be able to smile and laugh even in the midst of stay at home orders and anxiety and stress.

1. The Psalmist speaks of oppression – even speaks of his back being plowed! The Jewish people in Europe were nearly obliterated during World War II. There is still anti-Semitism today. Jewish people have learned to persevere and to see freedom from God (verse 4) by praying to God, lamenting to God, and depending on God. We can learn from their example.
2. The suffering of oppression and your back being plowed like a field can makes us feel overwhelmed or defeated. But God gives victory (verse 2) and freedom from the wicked (verse 4). God can do the same for us. We can claim that we still belong to God in the midst of suffering.
3. The last verse speaks of not wanting God to bless those who hate Zion. However God blesses those who have been oppressed. Share how God has blessed you; go around to each person attending your group and ask them. It is healthy to count our blessings and to show gratitude.
4. The people of God in the Old Testament persevered through many wars, poverty, and oppression. They achieved making a nation and maintaining their identity. Share where you have achieved something and share how you persevered to do it.
5. Is the thing you struggled with prayer, Bible study, helping others consistently, giving or something else? How might you try to change things to persevere and draw closer to God? Two motivators might be to love Jesus back for first loving you; and to help yourself to be more like Jesus by persevering in spiritual practices.