

Group Gathering Question:

As we have had some warm sunny days lately, what is the best thing you have done outdoors? (walk or jog, yard work, play with kids, sit on your deck/porch?)

Read this week's scripture and discuss:

1. What would be the mood of pilgrims traveling on a winding road through the hills? What about after dark? Can you put yourself in their shoes as you read this Psalm?
2. Are you more of a night owl or a morning person? Do you feel you need God's touch or protection more at night or in the day?
3. Jerry talked about the different "temples" and gods which we are tempted to turn to in times of struggle (e.g. buying stuff at Target or Amazon; trying to read or binge on TV, food, drink as a means of escaping to the hills). Are there any of these (or other temples or gods) which you are tempted to run to in times of trouble?
4. What might happen if you began each day with this question: I wonder what the Lord has done while I slept?
5. When do you feel most vulnerable? Most protected? Can you share a story of what God's watching over you, or God's protection, feels like?
6. Do you believe that our Lord "always" watches over you? Why or why not?

prayer requests

- > For healing for Lisa Clyngenpeel and Dan Duke,
- > For continued healing for Carver McGriff and Joe Mundil.
- > For friends that are isolated in their homes, for extended family members or friends who have Covid-19, for those missing or mourning loved ones.

Most of the Psalms we are using during this stay at home time are Psalms of Ascent. In Psalm 121 you can really imagine the Jewish people traveling through the hills, possibly having to camp out at night, on their way to Jerusalem to worship. This short Psalm uses the word "Lord" (Yahweh) 5 times and "keep" or "watch" 6 times. The Lord keeps you. The Lord watches you. What does that look like? Can we believe it? May we put our trust in the Lord who keeps watch over us.

1. The people could be traveling through hills (shephelah) in Israel to get to Jerusalem. They can't see their destination, only the hills. So they must look to God for help. There could be robbers at night wanting to hurt them or take their things. They needed to trust in God for basic safety and protection. We need to trust God for protection even during this global pandemic.
2. God can speak to us or meet us anytime and anywhere. We can be more open to hearing from God depending if we're more in tune with God at night or in the morning. Discuss when you need God most, or when you feel the need for God or connection with God the most.
3. Ask your group to share what they run to in times of trouble.
4. This question was adapted from Eugene Peterson. God is at work while we sleep. He does not slumber nor sleep. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving. God is at work all the time. By casting our cares on him, we can hopefully sleep well while God is sovereign.
5. This question assumes that sometimes you feel vulnerable or need God's protection. Most of us do. Ask your group members to share what that feels like. Believe like the Psalmist does that God does care and is watching over you.
6. Do you believe this Psalm 121 that God watches over you? Does God always have your back or does it feel like he leaves you alone sometime? This might be important to discuss. God always loves his people and we hold in tension the fact that God does not always heal the sick or protect the vulnerable. We also hold God's goodness in tension with the consequences of sin and the fallen nature of the world. Whatever happens, God promises to never leave nor forsake us.