



Christ Church Small Group Discussion Guide

Does it Get Any Better? - Ryan Lowe

"O Lord, God of my salvation, I cry out to you by day. I come to you at night. 3 For my life is full of troubles, and death draws near. 4 I am as good as dead, like a strong man with no strength left. 5 They have left me among the dead, and I lie like a corpse in a grave. I am forgotten, cut off from your care. 6 You have thrown me into the lowest pit, into the darkest depths. 7 Your anger weighs me down; with wave after wave you have engulfed me. 8 You have driven my friends away by making me repulsive to them. I am in a trap with no way of escape. 9 My eyes are blinded by my tears. Each day I beg for your help, O Lord; I lift my hands to you for mercy. 14 O Lord, why do you reject me? Why do you turn your face from me? 15 I have been sick and close to death since my youth. I stand in despair and desperate before your terrors. 16 Your fierce anger has overwhelmed me. Your terrors have paralyzed me. 17 They swirl around me like floodwaters all day long. They have engulfed me completely. 18 You have taken away my companions and loved ones. Darkness is my closest friend.

Psalms 88

Today some of you are walking through a very dark chapter in your life - and you're wondering - is this ever going to end? Or - maybe for some of you, life is pretty good right now - but you are worried about it getting bad.

Psalm 88 is like a bad show! We find ourselves right in the middle of a horrific story. You have no idea how it is going to turn out. You think "how in the world can this possibly turn out well?"

How can one of the Psalms end like that? Why did God choose to include that Psalm in His book? Because sometimes our lives feel just like that.

• **Have you ever experienced.....?**

- **Personal Betrayal or Neglect** - vs 8 "You have driven my friends away by making me repulsive to them."
- **Chronic Pain** - vs 15 "I have been sick and close to death since my youth."
- **A sense of helplessness** - vs "You have thrown me into the lowest pit, into the darkest depths."
- **Loneliness** - vs 18 "You have taken away my companions and loved ones."
- **Feeling Hopeless** - vs 15 "...I am in despair."

This is where so many people find themselves right now. But let's keep reading....now to Psalm 89

"I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. 8 You are entirely faithful, O LORD. 9 You rule the oceans. You subdue their storm-tossed waves. (for Jews at the time, the ocean represented the great unknown - the sea was a mighty uncontrolled power. - The Psalmist says - God - you are totally in control of that.) 10 You crush the great sea monster. (Scholars say that was probably a metaphor for enemy nations) You scattered your enemies with your mighty arm. 11 Everything in the world is yours - you created it all. 12 You created north and south. Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon praise your name. (These were the two tallest mountains in Israel. They were a metaphor for greatest powers on earth. So he's saying - even the mightiest power is under His control) V 21, the Lord says 21 I will steady him with my hand; with my powerful arm I will make him strong. 22 The enemy shall not outwit him; the wicked shall not humble him. 23 I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. 24 My faithfulness and unfailing love will be with him, and by my authority he will grow in power. 25 I will extend his rule over the sea, his dominion over the rivers. 26 And he will call out to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. 34 No, I will not break my covenant; I will not take back a single word I said."

Psalm 89

We all go through chapters in our lives - sometimes long ones - that feel like Psalm 88. And the fact that Psalms like this are in the Bible shows us that we can be honest with God during those chapters. Yet they do not INVALIDATE the **STEADFAST LOVE** and **FAITHFULNESS of God** celebrated in Psalm 89.

1. In the mist of pain - God's love rules over everything in our lives.

- **(v 9) He rules the raging sea** - which represents life's most chaotic elements - the cancer cell - the unexpected job loss - the random accident.
- **(v 10) He controls the sea monsters** - Our most threatening enemies - the coronavirus - or the boss who has it in for you at work or terrorists working to destroy our country
- **(v 12) He strides on top Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon** - The most powerful forces on the planet - He controls them.

Nothing falls outside of God's control! God's love and faithfulness is always working towards the good purposes He has for His people.

You can't always see His ultimate plan. But if your faith depends only on what your eyes can see, then you will often be disappointed. You've got to settle in your mind and your heart - **God's love rules over everything in my life.**

2. In the midst of pain - We experience God's love through His Presence.

*1 "O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; 2 many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God." 3 But you, O Lord, are a shield about me."
Psalms 3:1-2 (ESV)*

It's one thing to have a shield in front of you - it's a whole other thing to have **God as a shield around you.**

Though my OUTWARD man may SUFFER, my INWARD man is being RENEWED day by day.

God's glory in us is far greater than anything that which could happen to us.

Your head may be down with suffering today, but the presence of God lifts it up. He is with you. And nothing can ever happen to you that He will not work out for your good.

What do you do when you feel like life will never get better?

PRAY Psalm 88 to God

- Be honest. You aren't going to scare God away with your anger, with your tears, or with your doubts.
- He welcomes honesty and transparency.

PREACH Psalm 89 to yourself

- I will not fear - God is with me
- I will not doubt - God is in control
- I will not despair - God is good

**God is showing us that even in our darkest hours -
He is transforming the story of our lives into total praise.**

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. What part of the message resonated with you the most?
2. So what does your "Does it get any better" question deal with? Your marriage, other relationships, finances, a job, etc?
3. Is there some area of your life that you've given up praying for because you don't think it will change?
4. How honest have you been with the Father through some of these longer chapters of your life? How do you tell Him what's going on or how you feel about what's happening?
5. Do you believe the truth of Psalms 89; that He rules over life's most chaotic elements, most threatening enemies, and most powerful forces? Why is it sometimes hard to believe?
6. When have you ever felt like God was hiding from events happening in your life? Do you feel that way now?
7. How can we draw nearer to Him in our scary moments and feel more anchored in our faith?
8. What are three practical ways we can continue to encourage ourselves and help each other to get into God's presence?
9. God is showing us even in our darkest hours that He is our shield, protection, and comforter. Therefore, how can we walk in faith and overcome anxiety, fear, and/or doubt as the body of Christ in today's world?
10. In light of current events, pray with your group for God to move on behalf of our communities, country, and our world.