

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides
June 25th

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

1. What is one specialty food dish that you can make? What inspired you to make that meal?

Bible Study Questions

1. Read some of the cursing Psalms. Psalm 69:19-28, Psalm 109:6-15, Psalm 137
 - What are some of the descriptions that you see here that the author wants God to do to his enemy?
 - What emotional reactions do these verses bring about with you?
 - Has there been a time in your life when you have found yourself wanting to pray these same words to God?
2. Pastor Michael made the statement that these Psalms teach us that God takes evil seriously. How do we, in our emphasis on compassion and love, diminish the devastation of evil in the world?
3. How does it impact your view of God knowing that he invites us to process our anger in prayer?
4. Read Romans 12:12-17. How is the command for us to forgive compatible with allowing God to avenge? How do cursing psalms help us reach a point of forgiveness?
5. How could you use these Psalms to come along side of someone who has been deeply hurt by another person? How can they encourage you when you have been wronged?

June 25th
Psalms of lament

One of the most troubling form of writings in the Psalms is cursing Psalms. Violent curses show up more than 20 times within the book of Psalms and Jesus himself would have read these while in prayer. Early church Bible teachers such as Origen or Augustine tried to explain them away as allegories about defeating sinful desires. Yet that surely was not the intention of those who first prayed these prayers. It all prompts the big question: Why are they here and what do we do with them?

I. Cursing Psalms:

- **A call for God to bring justice against evil doers:** The person praying is the victim of some crime and they are crying out to God for justice. In Psalm 137, the authors are grieving the violence and taunting received at the hands of the Babylon. The request is that God would act to pay them back for their evil.
- **Can include vivid descriptions of the punishments that the author wants God to bring:** In Psalm 109, David prays that the children of his adversary would be fatherless and be beggars on the street. In Psalm 137, it is asked that God would bless anyone who dashes Babylonian infants against the rocks.

II. What Cursing Psalms do for us

- **Prompt us to take evil seriously:** We often focus our attention on God's compassion and love at the expense of his justice. However, these Psalms force us to address the pain caused by evil. Lives are destroyed and God's children are assaulted. That depth of evil requires a response. It should cause us to stop and consider whether we are doing evil to each other that creates these kinds of responses.
- **Provides an appropriate outlet for our anger:** In Psalm 137, the people could respond to their grief with violence to their tormenters. Instead, they appropriately bring their pain and anger before God. The words are ugly, but God is big enough to handle them. Invites them to lay their bitterness and hatred at the foot of the cross and to allow him to deal with it.
- **Positions us trust that our heavenly father will bring justice:** There is a paradox in the character of God. He is a God of compassion, but also a God of justice. In Romans 12:12-17, Paul instructs Christians not to seek revenge. Instead, they are to do good and allow God to avenge them. These prayers prompt us to give God our grievances and then trusts that he will make things right.

- **Opens the door for forgiveness:** To forgive is to simply cancel a debt. It is when we say to someone, "you owe for what I did, but I will not hold that against you." Cursing psalms enable us to take someone off of our hook, and to move them onto God's hook to do as he pleases. It also allows God to do a work in our heart, replacing our anger with his compassion.

Conclusion

Cursing Psalms are difficult to process. They contain violent language that seem out place in God's Word. Yet, they show the seriousness of evil and the invitation to bring our pain and anger to God. In the process, we find both the God who brings justice but also brings comfort to the broken hearted.