

THE SUMMER OF PSALMS

Small Group Guide: Psalm 85 - Praying for Restoration

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together asking God to speak to your hearts and help you apply His Word to your lives.

Icebreaker

Share a time when you felt lost or abandoned (even temporarily) and how you found your way back to safety or connection. How did that experience shape you?

Sermon Summary

This message explores Psalm 85, written in a context where God's people were returning from exile to find their promised land in ruins. Despite feeling abandoned, the psalmist demonstrates how to pray through disappointment by remembering God's former mercies, acknowledging present circumstances honestly, and trusting God's character enough to ask Him to speak and restore again.

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Remembering God's Former Mercies

1. **The Power of "Again":** The psalmist repeatedly asks God to restore "again." What does adding the word "again" to our prayers reveal about God's past faithfulness? How does it change the nature of our requests?
2. **Your Spiritual Memorials:** The Israelites were commanded to stack stones as reminders of God's faithfulness. What are some "stones" or memories in your spiritual journey that remind you God has not abandoned you?

3. **Fighting Forgetfulness:** Why do you think we so easily forget God's past provisions when facing current difficulties? What practical steps can you take to remember God's faithfulness more consistently?

Part 2: The Reality of Sin's Consequences

4. **Generational Impact:** The sermon emphasized that "sin affects us and others around us far more than you could ever imagine." How have you seen this play out in your life or family? How does this reality motivate you toward holiness?
5. **Natural vs. Spiritual Consequences:** The Israelites experienced God's forgiveness but still faced the consequences of their disobedience. How do you reconcile experiencing both God's mercy and the ongoing effects of past sin?
6. **Breaking Cycles:** What patterns or sins in your life might affect future generations? What steps can you take now to break those cycles?

Part 3: Asking God to Speak

7. **Fear of God's Voice:** The pastor noted that "too often we avoid asking this question because we're afraid of what He will say." Have you experienced this? What does our fear of God's words reveal about what we truly treasure?
8. **Smooth Words vs. Truth:** Isaiah 30 describes people who wanted to hear "smooth things" rather than truth. In what areas of life is our culture most guilty of this today? Where might you be tempted toward this yourself?
9. **Trust and Obedience:** The psalmist could ask God to speak because he trusted God's character. On a scale of 1-10, how much do you trust that God's plans for you are truly good, even when difficult?

Key Takeaways

1. **Our present circumstances should cause us to cling to God's former mercies.** When we feel abandoned, we must intentionally remember how God has shown up before.
2. **Sin will affect your life and those around you more than you could ever imagine.** The consequences of unrepented sin extend beyond ourselves to future generations.
3. **When we know God loves us, we can trust His words to us.** God has proven His love by sending His Son, so we can approach Him without fear, asking Him to speak truth into our lives.
4. **In moments of uncertainty and fear, we can turn to God because He has turned to us.** God consistently pursues His wayward children with open arms.

Practical Applications

This Week:

1. **Start a "Remembrance Journal":** Write down 3-5 specific times God has provided for you, answered prayer, or shown His faithfulness. Return to this list when you feel discouraged.
2. **Pray with "Again":** Identify one area where you need God's restoration and pray specifically: "God, would you _____ again?" (Examples: revive my passion for You again, restore my marriage again, give me strength again)
3. **Ask God to Speak:** Set aside 15 minutes of quiet time this week. Pray: "God, what do You want to say to me?" Then read Scripture and listen, writing down what comes to mind.
4. **Recruit Accountability:** If you're struggling with a persistent sin, reach out to someone this week to ask for help. Don't wait until you're "chained" to it.
5. **Break Generational Patterns:** Identify one pattern from your family of origin that you don't want to pass on. Take one concrete step this week toward breaking that cycle.

Reflection Questions for Personal Prayer

- Where do I feel abandoned by God right now?
- What former mercies of God am I forgetting?
- What sin am I holding onto that I need to confess and turn from?
- Am I willing to hear God's truth even if it's uncomfortable?
- What would it look like for God to restore me "again"?

Closing Prayer

Pray together using the framework of Psalm 85:

- **Praise** God for His past faithfulness
- **Confess** areas where you've wandered from Him
- **Ask** God to restore and revive you again
- **Listen** for what God wants to speak to your group

For Next Week

Consider memorizing Psalm 85:6-7 as a group: *"Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation."*