

## BIBLE STUDIES ON PSALMS

### Psalm 13: Prayer in Emotional Pain

#### Bible Study Preparation and Materials Needed:

Reflecting on: Psalm 6 - Prayer in Emotional Pain

For the Lesson: Orthodox Study Bible or Holy Bible: Armenian Church Edition

*Recommended Orthodox Study Bible* [HERE](#).

*Recommended Holy Bible: Armenian Church Edition* [HERE](#).

#### *Optional Practice*

If time permits, begin or conclude this Bible study with an antiphonal Psalm reading. Have students read the psalm aloud in two groups, line by line. Encourage them to hear David's emotion, allowing it to become their own prayer.

#### Memory Verse:

**But I hoped in Your mercy;  
My heart shall greatly rejoice in Your salvation.**

**- Psalm 13:5**

## Bible Study Lesson

### Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տո՛ւր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քո՝ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրոց, ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛ զիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos, ee paneets yev kordzots prgya zees yev voghormya ko araradzots eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

## A Reflection on Psalm 13: When God Seems Silent

Have you ever sent a text to someone important and watched as the “delivered” turns to “read” but no response comes? Hours pass. Days pass. You start wondering if you said something wrong, if they’re mad at you, or if they just don’t care anymore. That uncomfortable silence starts playing tricks with your mind.

Sometimes prayer can feel exactly like that. You pour out your heart to God, and then... nothing. No sign, no answer, no relief. Just silence that seems to stretch on forever. You begin to wonder if God even got your message, or if He “read” it and chose not to respond.

Let’s be real — waiting is torture. Especially when you’re waiting for something that really matters. When you’re in pain and God seems silent, every day feels like a year. Every prayer feels like it’s bouncing off the ceiling.

You start to wonder if you’re doing something wrong, if God is punishing you, or if He’s just forgotten about you completely.

In those moments when heaven feels locked up tight, Psalm 13 becomes our voice. Psalm 13 is for those moments when God’s silence feels louder than His voice. Through David’s honest wrestling, we try to reach God during the hardest part of our faith: trusting God when He seems absent. What makes this psalm remarkable isn’t that it gives us easy answers. It shows us how to journey from doubt to trust, from “Where are You?” to “I will sing,” all in six short verses.

David doesn’t pretend everything is fine. He doesn’t spiritualize his pain with pretty words. He asks the question that’s been burning in his chest, the one he’s probably been afraid to say out loud: “How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?”

This psalm gives us permission to be honest about how hard it is to trust when God seems absent. It reminds us that faith isn’t about pretending we’re okay when we’re not. It’s about bringing our real questions to a real God who can handle them.

David understands us. He’s been there. And he’s not embarrassed to admit it.

### Psalm 13 (OSB)

*How long, O Lord?  
Will You forget me unto the end?*

*How long will You turn Your face from me?  
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,  
Having sorrows in my heart daily?  
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?*

*Look upon me and hear me, O Lord my God.  
Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep unto death,  
Lest my enemy say, “I prevailed against him,”  
Lest those who afflict me rejoice if I am shaken.*

*But I hoped in Your mercy;  
My heart shall greatly rejoice in Your salvation.  
I will sing to the Lord, who is good to me;  
I will chant to the name of the Lord Most High.*

*“How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?”* Here’s what’s powerful about this question: David isn’t doubting God’s existence. He’s wrestling with God’s timing. He knows God is real — he’s just confused about why God isn’t moving. That’s not weak faith; that’s honest faith.

The Orthodox Church understands this struggle. They don’t rush us past our questions or shame us for our doubts. St. Augustine taught that *“Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.”* Sometimes the darkness before dawn is where our faith learns to see differently.

Notice that David doesn’t ask “how long?” just once. He asks it **four** times. That’s not because he thinks God didn’t hear him the first time. It’s because the weight of waiting is crushing him, and he needs to let it out.

**How long**, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?

**How long** will You turn Your face from me?

**How long** shall I take counsel in my soul,

Having sorrows in my heart daily?

**How long** shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Each question reveals a different layer of pain:

**Spiritual isolation** — “you’ve turned Your face from me”

**Emotional exhaustion** — “sorrows in my heart daily”

**External pressure** — “my enemy is winning”

When you’re struggling and God feels absent, it affects every part of your life. Your relationship with God feels broken. Your emotions are a mess. And it feels like everyone else is doing better than you. David doesn’t try to rank his pain or pick the “most spiritual” concern. He brings all of it to God. And God isn’t checking His watch, impatient with your questions. He’s not rolling His eyes at your “how long?” He’s present in the silence, working in ways we can’t always detect.

**Q:** *When have you felt like God was ignoring your prayers? How did you handle that feeling?*

When we cry “how long?” we’re making a declaration of faith: we still believe someone is listening. We still believe our story has more chapters. We still have hope that God will act, even when we can’t predict how or when.

**Q:** *What makes you want to ask God “how long?” What are you exhausted from waiting for?*

***In verse 3, David shifts from complaining to asking. He’s done venting and now he needs help.***

Look upon me and hear me, O Lord my God.  
Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep unto death,  
Lest my enemy say, “I prevailed against him,”  
Lest those who afflict me rejoice if I am shaken.

“Give light to my eyes” isn’t just about physical sight. It’s about spiritual vision. David is asking God to help him see clearly again, to give him hope, to show him that there’s still a future worth fighting for.

When we’re struggling and God feels distant, our spiritual vision gets clouded. We lose perspective. We can’t see past our immediate pain or imagine that things could get better.

**St. Ephrem the Syrian** understood this when he prayed, *“Lord, grant me to see my own faults and not to judge my brothers and sisters, for You are blessed unto ages of ages.”* He recognized that sometimes what we

need isn't a change in circumstances, but a change in how we see.

David asks for light because he knows that without it, he'll fall into despair ("sleep unto death"). He knows that his enemies will celebrate if he gives up. But more than that, he knows that God is the only one who can restore his vision.

Sometimes the healing we need isn't a change in our circumstances. It's a change in our perspective. Sometimes what we need most is to see our situation through God's eyes instead of our own.

**Q:** *What would it look like for God to "give light to your eyes" in your current situation?*

But I hoped in Your mercy;  
My heart shall greatly rejoice in Your salvation.  
I will sing to the Lord, who is good to me;  
I will chant to the name of the Lord Most High.

Here's where everything changes. In verse 5, David doesn't say, "God answered my prayer" or "my problems are solved." He says: "My heart shall greatly rejoice in Your salvation."

Notice that word: "But." It's a turning point. David chooses to pivot from his circumstances to God's character. His situation might not have changed, but his focus has shifted. He's choosing to trust who God is, not just what God does.

This is mature faith in action; the ability to say "but I trust" while still in the middle of uncertainty. **St. Isaac the Syrian** taught, "*When you cannot find consolation in the scriptures, be patient until you do; for you will surely find it, because God's word never returns empty.*" David embodies this patience that chooses hope over despair.

David moves from "how long?" to "I will rejoice." Not because his enemies are defeated, but because he remembers that God is good. Not because the silence is broken, but because he chooses to believe that God's mercy is bigger than his confusion.

**Q:** *How is it possible to rejoice before we see the answer? What does that kind of faith look like practically?*

The psalm ends with David making a choice that changes everything: "*I will sing to the Lord, who is good to me.*" David doesn't say "God was good to me" (past tense) or "God will be good to me" (future tense). He says "God is good to me" (present tense). Even in the silence, even in the waiting, even when he can't see what God is doing, David chooses to believe that God is being good to him right now.

This is worship in the dark. This is praise when you can't see the stage. This is choosing to trust God's heart when you can't understand His ways.

The Orthodox tradition calls this "sacrifice of praise," offering worship that costs us something, worship that goes against what we feel, worship that declares God's goodness even when we can't see it.

David ends where he started. He ends with God. But now, instead of questioning God, he's choosing to trust Him. Instead of focusing on the silence, he's choosing to believe in God's mercy. Instead of waiting for his feelings to change, he's choosing to worship based on who God is.

**Q:** *What would it look like for you to "sing to the Lord" in your current situation, even while you're waiting?*

Psalm 13 teaches us that God's silence doesn't mean God's absence. Sometimes the seasons when He feels

furthest away are the ones where He's doing His deepest work in us. It teaches us that faith isn't about having all the answers. Faith is about choosing to trust the One who does.

The silence isn't punishment. It's not because you're not praying hard enough or because your faith is too weak. Sometimes silence is God's way of teaching us to listen with our hearts instead of our ears. Sometimes He's quiet because He's preparing something we can't even imagine yet.

And sometimes, the miracle isn't that He breaks the silence. The miracle is that He gives us the strength to keep trusting while we wait.

## Reflection Questions

1. What kind of silence from God is hardest for you to handle?
2. Do you think it's okay to ask God "how long?" Why or why not?
3. What helps you keep trusting when you can't see what God is doing?
4. How can you choose to hope in God's mercy when your circumstances haven't changed?

### Close with prayer:

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ճանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesheree, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sasanetsayts yev voghormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.