

## BIBLE STUDY

### Psalm 42 (OSB 41): Rescue and New Beginnings

#### Bible Study Preparation and Materials Needed:

Reflecting on: Psalm 42 (OSB 41) - God is Close to the Brokenhearted

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.

#### Leader Notes

Things to Watch For:

Some students may have experienced real trauma. Don't push for details or force sharing.

If discussions stall, that's okay. Silence is better than forced responses.

Be ready to follow up individually with students who seem especially affected.

#### Adaptation Options:

For smaller groups (under 8), skip partner discussions and keep everything as full group.

For larger groups (over 15), use more small group time.

If your group is less familiar with Holy Scripture, add more context about psalms in general.

For groups that are more reserved, extend individual reflection time and reduce sharing time.

#### Memory Verse:

**“As the deer longs for the springs of water,  
so my soul longs for You, O God.”**

**- Psalm 42 (41 OSB):1**

## ***Psalm 42 (OSB 41)***

*1 For the End; for understanding;  
for the sons of Korah.\**

*2 As the deer longs for the springs of waters,  
So my soul longs for You, O God.*

*3 My soul thirsts for the living God;  
When shall I come and appear  
before the face of God?*

*4 My tears were my bread day and night,  
When they said to me each day,  
“Where is your God?”*

*5 I remembered these things,  
and poured out my soul within me;  
For I shall enter the place of the wondrous  
tabernacle, even the house of God,  
To celebrate a festival with a voice of  
great joy and praise.*

*6 Why are you so sad, O my soul?  
And why do you trouble me?  
Hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him;  
My God is the salvation of my countenance.*

*7 My soul within me was troubled;  
Therefore I will remember You  
From the land of the Jordan and Hermon,  
From the small mountain.*

*8 Deep calls to deep  
at the sound of Your waterfalls;  
All Your waves and billows went over me.*

*9 By day the Lord shall command His mercy,  
And by night His ode will be with me,  
A prayer to the God of my life.*

*10 I will say to God, “You are my protector.  
Why have You forgotten me?  
Why do I go about with a sad face when my  
enemies afflict me?”*

*11 Those who afflict me revile  
me when they break my bones,  
When they speak to me each day, saying,  
“Where is your God?”*

*12 Why are you so sad, O my soul?  
And why do you trouble me?  
Hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him.  
My God is the salvation of my countenance.*

## Bible Study Lesson

### Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տու՛ր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քո՛ւ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց, 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 42 (OSB Psalm 41): Thirsting for God in a Dry Season

Have you ever felt like your soul was running on empty? Like you were reaching for God but couldn't feel Him, or even didn't have the strength to reach because your spiritual thirst was so great it left you weak? Sometimes, during the season of such spiritual dryness, we feel so lost that we don't know where to go, or where to start, and how to find the spring that will curb our thirst. Psalm 42 is a prayer for a season of spiritual dryness. It's for the days when faith feels like thirst and silence, not joy and singing.

This psalm begins with one of the most iconic images in all of Scripture: *“As the deer longs for the springs of water, so my soul longs for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, the mighty, the living; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?”* (vv. 1-2)

Here we meet a person who doesn't deny their longing. Their soul aches for God like a dehydrated deer panting for water. This is a powerful image for young people today who may feel distant from God not because they stopped believing, but because they stopped feeling. Psalm 42 reminds us that longing itself can be holy.

**Q:** *Have you ever felt spiritually dry? What do you usually do in those moments?*

### Tears Instead of Songs

*“My tears were my bread day and night, when they said to me each day, ‘Where is your God?’”* (v. 3)

Pain doesn't just live in our hearts. It gets echoed by voices around us. The psalmist isn't just hurting, he's being mocked. *“Where is your God now?”* This is one of the cruelest questions someone in pain can hear. It attacks not just your circumstances but your faith itself. Sometimes that voice comes from others who don't understand. But often it comes from inside us, from our own doubts when prayers seem unanswered and God feels silent.

Notice the psalmist doesn't pretend everything is fine. He doesn't hide his tears or force a smile. He's honest about the pain. This honesty is actually a form of faith because it trusts that God can handle our real feelings.

In these moments, we may not have answers, but we still have memory: *“I remembered these things, and I poured out my soul within me; for I shall enter the place of the wondrous tabernacle, even the house of God, to celebrate a festival with a voice of great joy and praise, even the sound of those who keep festival.”* (v. 4)

He remembers when worship was easy. When the presence of God felt near. When joy was natural. He recalls the sound of celebration, the feeling of being surrounded by other believers praising God together. Even though he doesn't feel it now, he lets memory strengthen his faith. This is why we need community and why we keep showing up to church even when we don't feel like it. Those memories become anchors when we're drifting.

**Q:** *Why is it helpful to remember joyful moments in our spiritual life when we're going through dry or painful seasons?*

## Hope in the Question

*“Why are you so sad, O my soul? And why do you trouble me? Hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him; my God is the salvation of my countenance.” (v. 5)*

This is the turning point of the psalm. The speaker talks to his own soul. Notice what he doesn't do. He doesn't shame himself for feeling sad. He doesn't tell himself to “snap out of it” or “be more spiritual.” He doesn't run from the pain or pretend it doesn't exist. Instead, he asks his soul a question with gentleness and then gives it a command: hope.

This is profound. The psalmist recognizes that sometimes our souls need to be reminded of what's true, especially when feelings are overwhelming. He's not denying his sadness. He's choosing not to let sadness have the final word. He preaches to himself, telling his soul to hope even when hope feels impossible.

In the Orthodox tradition, this honest conversation with the soul is at the heart of repentance and renewal. St. Gregory of Nazianzus spoke of the soul's dialogue with God as a path toward healing. The Church Fathers understood that we are not just passive victims of our emotions. We can speak truth to ourselves. We can redirect our hearts toward God even when everything in us wants to despair. The psalmist shows us that part of growing in faith is learning how to talk to your own soul with compassion and hope, not with harsh judgment or fake positivity.

**Q:** *What would it look like for you to speak to your own soul the way the psalmist does? What would you say?*

## The Deep Cries Out

*“Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and billows went over me.” (v. 7)*

This verse is mysterious and poetic, and it captures something we've all felt but struggle to put into words. “Deep calls to deep” is like saying, “The depths of my pain are crying out to the depths of God.” It's the deepest part of you reaching for the deepest part of Him. When you're overwhelmed, when you're drowning in emotions, questions, or chaos, it can feel like wave after wave is crashing over you. You barely catch your breath before the next one hits.

But here's the beautiful truth hidden in this image. God is not far from the deep places. In fact, He's already in the deep with us. The waves are His waves. The depths know His voice. Even when we feel like we're going under, we're actually being swept into His presence. This doesn't make the pain less real, but it does mean we're not alone in it.

The psalmist doesn't just describe despair. He clings to God's faithful love even in the middle of the storm: *“The Lord commands His mercy in the daytime, and in the night His ode is with me.” (v. 8)*

Notice the rhythm here. Day and night, mercy and song. God's love doesn't abandon us when the sun goes down. There is a song in the night, even if it's quiet, even if only God can hear it. This is the kind of faith that carries us through, not loud and triumphant, but steady and sure.

**Q:** *What does “deep calls to deep” mean to you? Have you ever felt God present even in your darkest moments?*

## Final Plea, Lasting Faith

The psalm ends not with total resolution, but with returning trust: *“Why are you so sad, O my soul? And why do you trouble me? Hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him; my God is the salvation of my countenance and my God.” (v. 11)*

Notice that the psalmist repeats the same words from verse 5. He's still asking his soul the same question. He's still having to preach hope to himself. This tells us something important: spiritual growth isn't always about arriving at a place where we never struggle again. Sometimes it's about learning to return to hope, again and again, even when the struggle continues.

The struggle isn't over, but the posture has changed. Instead of being crushed by despair, the soul is learning to hope. Instead of being paralyzed by pain, the psalmist is choosing to give thanks. This is what faithfulness looks like in the dry seasons. Not victory, but perseverance. Not answers, but trust.

Sometimes God doesn't immediately lift us out of the pit. Instead, He gives us a song to sing in the pit. He doesn't

always remove the desert, but He walks with us through it. That's what Psalm 42 offers: a liturgy for the dry season, a prayer for the spiritually thirsty, and a reminder that longing for God is itself a form of meeting Him.

When you feel distant from God, remember this psalm. Remember that your thirst is evidence that you were made for living water. And remember that even in the deepest darkness, God's mercy commands the day and His song fills the night.

## Closing Activity: Letter to My Soul

Materials: Paper and pens, coloring pencils, markers

Following the David's example of speaking to his own soul, students write a brief letter to their own soul using the format:

"Why are you \_\_\_\_,

O my soul? Hope in God because \_\_\_\_."

Students fill in the blanks honestly (sad, anxious, angry, confused, etc.) and then give their soul one reason to hope. They can continue this activity, turning it into prayer and personalizing it by decorating with stickers and coloring pencils. Students may keep this private or share if comfortable.

## Reflection Questions

1. What part of this psalm can you relate to the most right now?
2. How can you practice hope even when you don't feel it?
3. What spiritual memories encourage you when you feel distant from God?
4. How does talking to your own soul help you in difficult times?
5. Where do you feel a need to cry out "deep to deep" in your life today?

### 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 aradzots 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.