

Week Beginning: 8th December 2019

Worship Series: #2 in series

CHRISTMAS
PLAYLIST



lifegroups
live life abundantly

living sharing growing

Theme Verse

How can we sing the songs of the Lord
while in a foreign land?

Psalms 137:4

Remember This Week

When disappointment, disillusionment or despair sets in or the song has stopped in your life, don't give up. God has not forgotten you. He comes to save you and fill your life with a peaceful tune that ignites hope and anticipation.



**Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us,
that we may be saved.**

Psalms 80:3

Come, Lord Jesus, and put a new tune into our hearts this Advent. When life is full of despair or stuck in the same groove, soothe us with the next track of your faithful promise, for your coming plays a new song in our ears that you long to be sung from our lips. Bless our time together as we study your Word that your songs of hope and peace may fill our advent days as we long for your coming, for you alone have the power to save us from a song of despair. Amen.



1. *Share your highs and lows since you last met with one another.*
2. *What was the first vinyl/cassette/CD/music album you bought?*
3. *What's your favourite Christmas tune and why?*
4. *What is the one memory or image in your mind that you most wish you could forget, a time that maybe was filled with great despair?*
5. *What gets you most angry in life and how do you tend to deal with anger?*

You know those tunes that get stuck in your head and you just can't shake them. Maybe it is an ad jingle, a song you heard on the radio, some musical hiccup from your memory, something the kids practiced on their instrument but it's stuck and it isn't going anywhere except around and around in your head. Life often has its own playlist. Sometimes you "whistle while you work" Sometimes it's a song of sadness or despair, of frustration and futility. Try as you might you just can't seem to shake it and that tune persists, setting the tone for all you are and all you do. Between now and the end of the Christmas season, we'll invite Jesus to rewrite the music for our lives. Instead of the same old songs stuck on repeat, we'll allow Jesus to write us into 'A Christmas Playlist' and be swept into a song of hope for all eternity. Today we will explore what happens when we are stuck in a Song of Despair.

Read Psalm 137

6. *What do you find most confronting/challenging/troubling about this text and why?*
7. *What does the Psalmist remember and what does he ask God to remember? Why?*
8. *What emotions do you see expressed in this Psalm?*

The context of Psalm 137 is the Babylonian exile; one of the most traumatic events that the Old Testament church ever experienced. It sucked the air out of the life of the Old Testament people of God when it happened; it was like a huge scratch in the vinyl of their existence that stopped the song of freedom that should have been in their hearts. When God handed them over to suffer the consequences of the choices they had made after repeatedly being warned





about what would happen, they were totally unprepared for it. The first verses are full of heartbreak, pain and devastation the Psalmist experiences. The people of God are ruled by a foreign people who have many gods and a god-king. They have lost their centre, their rhythm, their sense of direction, their hope for what they had been told was their future as God's people in God's world. What's more their captors are mocking them, taunting the Psalmist to sing the songs of his homeland and the greatness of his defeated God! But then the Psalm moves from hurt, pain and despair to anger.

9. *How comfortable are you with the language of this Psalm and the anger that is expressed?*
10. *Who in today's world, do you think would be able to pray this Psalm and claim it as their own words of pain?*
11. *How are the Psalmist's words actually words of great faith, that take our relationship with God deeper than just a surface relationship?*
12. *Why is it difficult to remain faithful to one's beliefs in difficult times? What are the evils/injustices in the world today that cause you to question the love and compassion of God?*
13. *What have been your lessons learned that you can share with others about going through hard times and holding onto faith in God?*

These Psalms give us permission to give to God our unedited anger. God doesn't expect us to pretend our outrage isn't real. So the Psalmist does exactly what he has been taught to do in the face of such evil and wickedness and injustice—he prays! He trusts God with his anger and he trusts God with his enemies. God came into a world where people were praying this kind of prayer about their enemies. Where people in their prime had been cut down and reduced to stumps in the ground. God responded...not with an army but with a baby in a manger, and an innocent man on a cross. God identified with those whose song was one of despair, who were despondant from the same song of brutality and evil that was being played ad nauseum in their life. God drew near to those who were being crushed by evil and allowed himself to be crushed by it to reveal the true enemy behind all evil, the Prince of darkness. For all those cut down by evil, for all whose song is filled with despair, there is hope. For God responds and God comes near.

Read Isaiah 11:1-10.

14. *In the context of Psalm 137, what hope do these words bring and what peace do you find personally in these verses in the context of your life at this point?*

This Psalm shows us what a vibrant and healthy spirituality looks like even when it seems all hope is lost. God invites us to pray and:

- A. Give and honest expression of our emotions, as raw and unedited as they may be. It is human to feel anger. It is dangerous to try and cover up our anger for it comes out in other ways; gossip, snide remarks, bitterness, poor health, lashing out at someone innocent, etc.
- B. Speak out against injustice: The Bible includes psalms like this psalm to give a voice to the voiceless. The Psalmist's anger is righteous anger – we should be outraged about atrocities and injustices, not become desensitised by them.
- C. Trust God to respond: The Psalmist does not ask for the power to take his revenge. While he tells God what he would like to see happen, he leaves it to God to act according to his justice. What we can learn in our own life is that when we are angry about what is happening, when it seems that our song has been taken from our lips and hearts, we can trust God to act. Forgiveness, peace, moving on to the next track of our lives is only possible when we express our emotion, including anger, to God first.

15. *What's one practical thing from this study you can apply this Advent to live with a greater hope and peace? Share it with group so they can hold you accountable for it!*

- * Praise God for his love that can handle our unedited anger. Thank Jesus for his willingness to be cut down so that we might know and experience peace with him for ever. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you go deeper in your relationship with God, and pray with boldness trusting God with your anger and your enemies.
- * Pray for those devastated by the fires around our country and for those who fight them.
- * Pray for the Carols Events we are a part of that the community may hear the good news of the Saviour, born in a manger for all of the world, to bring peace, hope, joy and love.

Turn to the person next to you and make the sign of the cross on the palm of their hand or forehead as you say:

Name, may the peace of Jesus play loudly in your ears this Christmas. Amen.

