

Group discussion Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”

Read Psalm 73 aloud.

1. What is the mood of this psalm?

What was the writer’s gripe in the first few verses (3-14)?

The success of the wicked – highlight verses 3-5 and 12.

How often do evil people succeed? When have you experienced this face-to-face?

Pacman Jones makes millions, Bernard Maidoff makes billions, and there is someone who stepped on you on the way to “the top.”

2. Why does it bother us to see evil people succeed?

We have an innate sense of right & wrong. It’s the law of sowing & reaping—honest, hard work should be rewarded while scoundrels deserve punishment. It seems especially unfair when evil people abuse others to enhance their status.

What Bible passages support our sense of right & wrong?

Lives of Abraham, Joseph, David, Saul, Ruth, Esther. Book of Proverbs. NT passages that become refrigerator magnets.

What Bible passages argue against our sense of right & wrong?

Job and Ecclesiastes. Lives of Jeremiah, Paul, and Jesus.

3. Midway through, the writer realizes that his or her heart is wrong.

What leads to this realization? How would you re-state 13-15?

The author considers the effect these words might have on his kids.

How does parenting sharpen your conscience? When have you said something that you hoped your children did not hear?

How did the words of verses 3-14 make the author feel (16, 21-22)?

When is it helpful to compare yourself to another person? *Rarely, if ever. Other people are an inadequate standard.*

4. What helped the author recover a healthy perspective?

See verse 17.

How does being in God’s presence clarify our vision?

What did this person remember about how God treats evil and righteous people?

See 18-19 and 27.

Compare yourself to anyone but Jesus you lose...

- If you see someone doing better, you can become discouraged or jealous.
- If you see someone doing worse, you can become proud.
- Nobody has adequate perspective to judge another person’s motives, efforts or results.

† **The big question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

In verses 23-28, the author confesses that the way to live is to honor God and not worry about how other people are faring. Keeping score is fruitless. Do you agree or disagree with this conclusion?

What helps you keep your focus on God, rather than on your peers?

Resources

Bible notes

- The Psalms are organized in five books. In general, the mood shifts from optimism about the nation of Israel to despair over how Israel was lost, and then finally to trust in God regardless of what happens in Israel.
- Psalm 73 is the first psalm in book three, where the sentiment tends to be negative because of Israel's destruction. So it could have been written by someone who had watched evil people destroy Israel. As with many of the psalms in this section, the conclusion is that God will eventually make things right.

Prayer ideas –

Seek God's strength for people who have suffered losses.

Pray for ways that your group and our church can do and be more of the things God wants in the world.

Ask for hearts that are focused on God, rather than on other people.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Prayer of praise for the good things God is doing.

Read a list of items and ask who would like to be near or far from it. Have them move around the room to express their feelings.

Possible items: Girls/boys, chocolate, fire, baseball games, fancy dinners, scary movies, apples, roller coasters, McDonald's, Vanderbilt football, golf on TV, jogging, snow, wrestling on TV.

Read Psalm 73:27-28 aloud.

What happens to people who are far from God?

What happens to people who are near to God?

How can someone draw near to God?



January 18, 2009

LIFE Group Guide

Psalm 73 – When bad people succeed

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme for this meeting: **Focus on God, and don't worry about what/how other people are doing.**

This month's sermon series is "Life is hard, but God is good." This LG guide considers a text complaining about the success of evil people.

35 adults are participating in LG leader training, and several of them will lead groups in the future. Please pray for God to bless us with more and better groups.

Important dates for the next few months:

- Feb. 1 LIFE groups (good night for Super Bowl party)
- Feb. 8 Service at College Hills
- Feb. 15 LIFE groups – A Year of Growth
- Feb. 22 LIFE groups -- A Year of Outreach
- Mar. 1 LIFE groups -- A Year of Compassion
- Mar. 5 Beans & Steak night for LG leaders
- Mar. 8 Service at College Hills

Serving opportunity: We are hosting Red Cross shelter training on Feb. 14. Call Carolyne Humphreys if your group is interested (754-5079).

Leadership tip: Pray for your group every week – for each member and for the health and growth of the group.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone's spiritual pulse, and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ What is your favorite cut of steak?
Let your group know that if they bring a guest in February, you will get steak on March 5.
- ❖ What has kept you busy recently?
- ❖ What are you looking forward to in the next six weeks?