

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 22:1-18 aloud.

1. How was the author of this psalm feeling? What might have been occurring in his or her life?

What phrases in the text give us an idea about this person's level of suffering?

2. How was this person feeling about God's response to the situation?

If the person felt forsaken by God (1-2), why pray to God?

How reverent was this prayer?

Our tradition suggests prayer should be solemn, thoughtful, and quiet, but this person is screaming in protest at God.

Read Psalm 22:19-31 aloud.

3. What changes in the second half of the psalm?

How do you explain the change in tone beginning in verse 22? Do you suppose this was written at a later date?

Assuming the entire psalm was written at the same time, how could it possibly make sense? How could the tone change so radically? *Verse 24 is the turning point. The writer felt like God finally heard.*

How does verse 24 answer the cry of verse 1? Could we say the first few verses were misguided and the second half corrects the theology?

Verse 24 answers verse 1, but it does not correct it. It is fine to scream at God. Maybe 18 verses of screaming are a prerequisite to arriving at verse 24.

4. What life situations could Psalm 22 address?

5. What did Jesus think of this prayer?

These are the words that came to mind during his darkest hour.

Which events from Jesus' crucifixion resemble Psalm 22?

6. Sometimes Christians make thoughtless remarks like Job's friends did. What are some things that might be true but we should avoid saying to sufferers?

"At least your loved one is Heaven now."

"Don't talk that way."

"I know exactly how you feel."

"Don't question God."

"She looks good in that casket."

"God knows best, so maybe it is better this way."

"I'm sure this will all work out for good in the end."

What is the best thing to say or do when someone is suffering?

† **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.*

The hardest part about being truly honest with God is...

Resources

Bible notes

- The psalm titles are often questionable. The reference to David could mean “to David” or “of David.” Rather than try to guess how a psalm fit in David’s life, it is better to treat it as anonymous and to consider the truth claims of the text itself.
- Verse 15 – a potsherd is a fragment of broken pottery.
- In the gospels of Matthew and Mark, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” are the only words recorded from Jesus on the cross. That gives us a clue how significant Psalm 22 was for early Christians.

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.*

Read Matthew 27:45-50 aloud.

Ask the kids to re-tell this story in their own words.

Explain that the 6th hour was noon, so it was dark at mid-day.

Why did Jesus die?

Ask the kids to draw a picture of Jesus dying on the cross and then invite them to show their drawings to the group later.



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LIFE Group Guide

Psalm 22 – The Prayer from the Cross

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme for this meeting: **Speaking honestly with God.**

Kevin is preaching a series on the last words of Jesus, and this week focuses on Jesus’ prayer, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me*”. Many readers do not realize that Jesus was quoting scripture, so this discussion guide helps us understand the background for the prayer.

Psalm 22 is the prayer of a struggler. The pain is so deep that this person feels forsaken by God. As with most psalms, expressing these feelings help the writer recall God’s presence so the mood changes by the end.

This is a great opportunity to discuss honesty in prayer. Many people do not feel comfortable pouring out their deepest longings to God, and that reluctance is an obstacle to thriving faith.

Remind your group that we get to meet two weeks in a row – today is a 5th Sunday and next week is a 1st Sunday.

Leadership tip: As a way to help people participate in prayer, lead a chain prayer. Begin the prayer, mention categories of people for God to bless (sick, strugglers, people to grow in faith, guests for Easter service) and invite members to call out names for God to bless.

I. Relate *Use a few of these to introduce the theme and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage individuals through these questions.*

- ❖ What would you like to do for our meeting next week?
- ❖ Krispy Kreme or Dunkin Donuts or something else?
- ❖ Who do you plan to invite to our Easter service (April 12)?
- ❖ How should you respond if a friend asks “does this make me look fat” and you want to say yes?