

Week 3

# THREADS OF FAITH

PSALM 137

## OPENING PRAYER

Lord God of hosts, set my experience of present trouble firmly in the structure of your great acts of salvation. And then help me to believe that your way is being worked out even in the chaos of this world I live in, through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*<sup>35</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Psalm 137 is perhaps the most desperate and hateful psalm in the Psalter, compiling the unruly emotions, complaints, and fears of the Psalms of Lament. The psalm is set in the context of the Babylonian exile, after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The psalmist and his companions weep and mourn for the loss of everything—their homeland, their culture, their center of worship, and, conceivably, their God. The psalm seethes with loss, bitterness, and hate. And yet, in its painful honesty and vulnerability, it reveals a faith that clings to God, who is still there.

Psalm 137 is an unlikely model of prayer for us in our times of greatest need. In it we discover that our faith has matured from a polite religiosity to an unshakeable conviction girded to God in a new way. During these difficult times, we can experience a greater intimacy with God, even the fellowship of sharing in the suffering of his Son, Jesus Christ. He is with us, he knows our pain, and he will sustain us while we wait for God to make all things right. Even if we cannot yet “*sing in a foreign land*” (v. 4), we can at least pray.

# KEY VERSE

*“How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?”*

**PSALM 137:4**

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# GETTING STARTED

Can you remember a time when you thought God had abandoned you? What were the circumstances? What did you learn as you walked through that time?

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# ENCOUNTER THE WORD

**PAYING ATTENTION TO THE TEXT AND MAKING OBSERVATIONS**

**Read Psalm 137.**

1. Why are the people weeping in verses 1–3? (See Psalm 74 and 79 for context.)
  
2. What/who are they afraid they will forget (v. 4–6)?
  
3. What do they want God to remember and to do?

# WATCH VIDEO

The video teaching can be found at [biblestudymedia.com/pilgrimspath](http://biblestudymedia.com/pilgrimspath).

## Video Notes

### BIG CONCEPTS:

- A new way of prayer
  - A new intimacy with God
  - Our suffering has a purpose.
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# ENGAGE OUR HEARTS

## APPLYING SCRIPTURE TO DEVELOP INTIMACY WITH GOD

4. According to Hebrews 4:14–16, why is it safe to pour out our most difficult emotions in prayer to Jesus? (See also Psalm 139 and John 10:14.)
  
5. According to Romans 8:26, how can God help us pray in our deepest grief? What do you think he prays for?
  
6. What part of Jesus’s suffering do you understand better, having been through it yourself? What part of your suffering do you think he understands having been through it himself?

# ENCOURAGE OTHERS

## BEARING WITNESS TO JESUS IN THE WORLD

7. How can God use your time of grief to bless another in theirs? (See 2 Corinthians 1:3–6.)
  8. What aspects of this lesson give you confidence or courage to walk by someone's side in grief?
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# PRAYERS

If you are doing this study as part of a group, you may want to share your prayer requests with each other. There is a Prayer & Praise Journal on p. 202 where you can keep track of your group's requests or write your own. Have someone close in prayer or pray the following prayer together.

# CLOSING PRAYER

I am so used to hiding my feelings and thoughts that others might find unacceptable, O God, that I even try to do it with you. Keep me honest in my prayers. You know how to deal with such as me: I do not fear your rejection, and I hope in your salvation, even in Jesus Christ. *Amen.*<sup>36</sup>