

START OVER AGAIN  
SERIES

# DISCUSSION

*Guide*

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January 21, 2024

## START OVER AGAIN (Week 3) Aaron McRae

### ➤ CONVERSATION STARTERS

**What is the most meaningful gift you have ever received? What made it so meaningful to you?**

### ➤ EXPLORATION

Many people have an internal dialogue going on in their heads throughout the day. This kind of self-talk may be rehearsing a conversation or rehearsing words in your mind that have previously been spoken. Whatever form it takes, our inner dialogue can be encouraging or it can be discouraging, it really depends on your individual experience.

As we move forward in our sermon series about the “soul” we are reminded that it is not self-talk we need, it is more soul-talk that is shaped by God. A great example of what we mean is found in Psalm 42.

#### ***Psalm 42:1-2 (From your bible read aloud)***

The writer is not actually thirsty for water, but like a deer in the wilderness, the writer is looking for water to quench its thirsty soul. Water sustains physical life but only God sustains the soul. The deepest desire of our souls can only be met in relationship with God.

*“Superficiality is the curse of our age. The desperate need of the soul is not for intelligence, nor talent, nor excitement, just depth.” Richard Foster ‘Celebration of Disciplines’*

Sadly, our culture tends to be very shallow even though what we truly need is depth. For many, as long as life is going well, there is no urgency to attend to the deep things of the soul. However, when difficulty comes, we are often desperate to find relief. There are many places we might go for relief, but the only place that we will find what we need is with God.

**Is it easier for you to turn to God when things are going well or when things are difficult? Why do you think that is?**

#### ***Psalm 42:3-4 (From your bible read aloud)***

These words are filled with anguish. The writer knows what it is like to suffer. He also remembers the good days that were filled with joy. Both of these are part of the human experience. We all have joy-filled days and sorrow-filled days.

This is something even Jesus experienced. Look at the words he spoke in the Garden of Gethsemane as he pleaded with his disciples to pray with him:

#### ***Matthew 26:38 (From your bible read aloud)***

Jesus is experiencing profound sorrow as he prepares for his death. He invites his trusted friends to join him as he brings this anguish to his Father in prayer.

It is one thing for your soul to thrive and flourish when everything is going well. It is an entirely different thing for your soul to flourish in the midst of pain, anxiety and the suffering life often brings.

When we suffer, we have a choice to respond the way Jesus did or to choose a different way to find comfort and relief. In the early 1500’s, Theologian Martin Luther

pointed out a vital distinction in the way we face trials that is still relevant today. He talked about a Theology of Glory VS a Theology of the Cross. If we are not careful, we can focus on things that lead us toward numbing rather than spiritual growth.

Theology of Glory	Theology of the Cross
Strength	Weakness
Welfare	Brokenness
Success	Suffering
Self-centered	Sacrificial

### Which of these lists best describes Jesus' life? Give examples

#### **Psalm 42:5 (From your bible read aloud)**

The writer here examines his soul and then reminds his soul where to put his trust. He makes an intentional choice to focus on God, not only on his circumstances.

*“The suffering needs soothing, not just numbing. We need real hope, the kind that can carry us through the night.” Tish Harrison Warren ‘Prayer in the Night’*

There are so many reasons that our souls might be downcast like the writer of Psalm 42. Maybe you had a stern and demanding parent who you never felt unconditional love from and now you keep yourself constantly busy, still trying to gain the approval you crave. You may find yourself striving to feel “good enough” or maybe you have experienced profound loss, loneliness or abandonment and you do everything you can to keep painful feelings at bay.

Taking an honest look at the condition of our souls is an important step in opening ourselves to the healing God wants to bring in our lives.

“Spiritual leadership emerges from our willingness to stay involved with our own soul- that place where God’s Spirit is at work stirring up our deepest questions and longings to draw us deeper into relationship with him.”

~Ruth Haley Barton

#### **Psalm 42:6-8 (From your bible read aloud)**

By remembering the works and ways of God, our souls find hope. What a beautiful thought that God directs his love to us as we look to him.

### What Our Souls Need To Hear

- **Songs for our souls**

There is great power when we sing songs of hope. They stay with us and remind us of God’s faithfulness and goodness when our circumstances cause us to doubt that truth.

### What is your favorite hymn or worship song when you feel down?

### What Our Souls Need To Hear

- **Scriptures for our souls**

**Hebrews 4:12 (From your bible read aloud)**

**3 John 1:2-4 (From your bible read aloud)**

### What do these verses tell us about the importance of scripture for our souls?

**Psalm 42:11 (From your bible read aloud)**

### What Our Souls Need To Hear

- **Prayers for our souls**

Taking your honest, authentic and unfiltered concerns to God in prayer, asking for help, wisdom and healing is a powerful experience. God cares about our souls and offers us everything we need to live in deep connection with him.

### > TAKE AWAY

The words of Psalm 42 provide a powerful framework for us to use as we face difficult times that threaten to disrupt our faith. We are invited to choose to focus on the truth of God rather than the temporary struggles of this life.

### > CHALLENGE

Read Psalm 42 every day this week. Pay attention to the condition of your soul. Seek out **songs**, **scriptures** and **prayers** that encourage you to trust God as they strengthen your soul.

**Pray together, asking God to help you keep your focus on him no matter what comes your way. Be ready to share about the experience next week.**