

Small Group Guide: Psalm 123 - Who Is Your Guide?

Series: A Long Obedience in the Same Direction

Overview

This week's sermon drew from Psalm 123, one of the Psalms of Ascent sung by pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem. The central question of the psalm and the sermon is this: On the journey of faith, who or what is guiding you? The psalmist deliberately lifts his eyes to God, taking the posture of a servant watching his master's hand, waiting for mercy and direction. In a world full of competing voices and influences, the Christian is called to make a conscious, daily choice to fix their eyes on Jesus.

Key Takeaways

- The life of faith is a long, deliberate journey, not an overnight transformation. Direction matters as much as movement.
- The world is constantly and aggressively competing for your attention, shaping your values, desires, and definition of success without you always realizing it.
- Confidence is not the same as wisdom. Volume is not the same as truth. Popularity is not the same as goodness.
- You are always being formed by something. Jesus warned that everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher (Luke 6:40).
- Taking the posture of a servant before God is not weakness. It is the posture of humility that opens the door to receiving mercy and being raised up as a son or daughter of God.
- Mercy is only received by those who know they need it. Humility is the prerequisite for grace.

- Jesus is not only the destination of the journey. He is the way itself.
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Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Take a few minutes to check in with each other before diving in.

- What is one voice, source, or influence that has shaped how you think about success or the good life? Where did that idea come from?
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Digging into the Sermon

1. The sermon described the world as constantly trying to influence and disciple us, often without our awareness. Can you think of a specific belief you held or a desire you had that you later realized came from the culture around you rather than from God? What did that realization feel like?
2. The pastor said, "If we are not careful, we spend our entire lives being disciplined by voices we never consciously choose to follow." How does that statement land with you? In what areas of your life do you think this might be most true right now?
3. Jesus said in Luke 6:39-40 that a student who is fully trained will be like their teacher. If someone looked at your daily habits, your spending, your fears, and your goals, what would they conclude about who or what is teaching you how to live?
4. The sermon made the case that control is an illusion and that we are all servants to something, whether we acknowledge it or not. How do you respond to that idea? Is there an area of your life where you are holding tightly to the illusion of control?
5. The psalmist says he lifts his eyes to God. The sermon emphasized that this is an active, intentional choice, not something that just happens. What does it practically look like in your daily life to lift your eyes to God rather than to your circumstances, fears, or the noise of the world?
6. The image of the servant watching the master's hand is a picture of humility and patient waiting. Waiting on God is described in the sermon as a hard discipline. Where are you currently in a season of waiting on God? How are you handling it?

7. The sermon contrasted two men praying in Luke 18. One was confident in his own standing before God. The other simply cried out for mercy. Which posture do you find yourself more naturally gravitating toward, and why?
 8. Blind Bartimaeus refused to be silenced and kept crying out for mercy even when the crowd told him to stop. Is there something in your life right now where you need to keep crying out to God even when circumstances or people around you suggest it is pointless?
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Going Deeper

9. The sermon stated that there is no way to abundant life apart from God, and that when we believe otherwise, we have believed a lie. What is the specific lie you are most tempted to believe right now about where life and happiness are found?
 10. The prodigal son was willing to return as a servant, but the father received him as a son. How does that picture of God's mercy change the way you think about coming to God in your current season of life?
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Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to practice this week individually or as a group.

Audit Your Influences Set aside 20 to 30 minutes this week to honestly examine the voices you are regularly listening to. Consider the podcasts, social media accounts, news sources, and people who most shape your thinking. Ask yourself: Is this voice leading me closer to Jesus or further from him? Make one concrete adjustment based on what you find.

Practice the Upward Look Each morning this week, before checking your phone or engaging with the day, take five minutes to deliberately lift your eyes to God. Pray something simple: "Lord, I do not have this figured out. I am watching your hand today. Lead me." Journal what you notice over the course of the week.

Identify Your Master Prayerfully ask God to reveal what is currently functioning as your master, the thing that most drives your decisions, your anxieties, and your sense of worth. Bring what he shows you to him in confession and surrender.

Cry Out for Mercy The ancient prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner" is one of the oldest prayers in the Christian tradition. Try praying it slowly and repeatedly throughout one day this week, letting it become a rhythm that reorients your heart.

Share the Journey The series has emphasized that we are not meant to travel alone. Identify one person in your life who is on this journey with you and reach out to them this week. Tell them where you are struggling. Ask them how you can pray for them.

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying as a group. Invite members to pray Psalm 123 aloud together as a group, slowly and reflectively, letting it function as a prayer rather than just a reading. Then allow time for anyone who wants to pray specifically for the areas where they need mercy or direction to do so.