

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Dale Wallace
Series: Soundtracks
July 2, 2023

How to Respond to Spiritual Drought

Psalms 42

**¹As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.**
**²My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.**
When shall I come and appear before God?^[b]
**³My tears have been my food
day and night,
while they say to me all the day long,
“Where is your God?”**
**⁴These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I would go with the throng
and lead them in procession to the house of God
with glad shouts and songs of praise,
a multitude keeping festival.**
**⁵Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation^[c] ⁶ and my God.**
**My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.**
**⁷Deep calls to deep
at the roar of your waterfalls;
all your breakers and your waves
have gone over me.**
**⁸By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.**
**⁹I say to God, my rock:
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning
because of the oppression of the enemy?”**
**¹⁰As with a deadly wound in my bones,
my adversaries taunt me,**

**while they say to me all the day long,
“Where is your God?”
11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation and my God.**

I want to start the morning with just a quick public service announcement. For those that do not know, since last July, the City of Waco has been in a drought. In fact, the city has responded accordingly - we have water restrictions and you're only allowed to water or sprinkle your yard on certain days of the week. How many of you are familiar with these restrictions in this drought that we're in, for those that live in Waco? OK, OK, that's awesome! And then how many of you, this is news and the preacher just gave the news for the city? How many of you it's news? It's OK. It's OK. You're just the people with dead yards or no yard. Alright? That's what I know because today's a big day.

I live in an address that has an even number, which means I can only sprinkle my yard on Wednesdays and Sundays. So, I have to preach, which is an amazing gift and responsibility to the Lord and then after 7:00 PM tonight, I can water my lawn. But only tonight and Wednesday. There are all these restrictions and in fact it's more thought through and thoughtful than you would expect. I got on the Waco website, there's a 21-page document of how Waco is responding to the drought that we're in. It's been amazing! They're going to lower water usage by 30% using this plan that they're moving forward with. It is impressive. I've been encouraged, I love Mayor Meek, Dillon Meek is amazing. I don't think he's a water expert, but he's got a great team helping our city through this drought.

And I start with that because the city has responded well to drought. I even would say, I think they were ready for drought. As we continue in our series of Soundtracks, we're looking to different Psalms and today, this morning, we are going to look at our response to spiritual drought. What do we do in the seasons of spiritual drought? And I think this is important for us because nobody really warns you of this when you become a Christian. You accept the free gift of Christ's forgiveness and believe in His life, His death, and His resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins. We're on cloud nine! We're like, "Wow! This is where life is found. Jesus is everything. I want to tell everyone about him." We start opening up our Bible and we're just crushing through the Bible, even though we're not always sure what it's saying. We're loving it. We're loving time with the Lord. We're praying. We're praying for our neighbors, our lost friends, and our lost family. We're just on fire. And then overtime, what ends up happening is we open up the Bible one day and it just doesn't hit quite as well as it did the day before. Then we start praying again and it just doesn't feel as exciting as it used to. Maybe you come to church on Sunday, and they sing a song like *Raise a Hallelujah*, and you're like, "Well, I don't really like this song. I prefer a different song." Or you come on July 4th weekend, and you get the bald college pastor, you don't get somebody else that you might have wanted to hear. You're like, "I just don't feel like being here." I appreciate that. Someone is giving me some thumbs up from the back. You agree. Thank you. Thank you.

Nobody warns you for the moments where you'll come to church on a Sunday and people are raising their hands around you and you're like, 'I don't feel like it.' 'I don't feel like God's around. I don't feel like He's close.' Nobody prepares us for those days, or few people prepare us well for those days, but this text to date does and that's why we need it. I know that not all of us are in a season of lament where you're going through a challenging circumstance or something like that, but I know somebody around you is and I know that one day you will be.

So today we're going to learn a right response to spiritual drought. I think you could even be like me. Where I audibly said to our sermon team this week, "Hey, I think it will be challenging for me to teach a lament on spiritual drought when I'm not in it. I don't have anything crazy going on. I'm having honest conversations with God that are challenging. I'm expressing my frustration. I'm not really experiencing that in some crazy way right now. I think it could be hard for me to connect to this text." And then what happened? I started studying this text. And I realized, for really the last year, my wife and I have been experiencing this challenge. It's this; it's that our spiritual life today doesn't feel the way it did a year or two ago. The primary reason is because of this amazing gift that we were given 11 months ago in the form of twins. We got a two for one special. So, we go to time with the Lord and sometimes it's interrupted. In fact, yesterday as I'm preparing for this sermon, I set my alarm to wake up early on a Saturday to spend time with God. It was going to be amazing! I got some caffeine ready to join me and I'm going to spend time with the Lord. And Ellie, my daughter, decided to set her alarm two hours before my alarm, which was one hour before they were supposed to wake up. So, it's hard - that quality time with the Lord doesn't always look the same. It doesn't feel the same.

That's been hard. My wife and I are both in ministry. So, it's like our jobs and our livelihoods depend on our spiritual health and I realized this is as much for me today as it is for anyone. So, if you've ever even experienced a little bit of apathy, a little bit of it doesn't feel the same, I think this text will encourage you. If you brought your Bibles, you can turn to Psalm 42. We are continuing in our series called Soundtracks going through the Book of Psalms. Psalms are a bunch of songs and that's why we called this Soundtracks. This morning we're going to see longing, lamenting, and lifting is what we're meant to do and how we respond to spiritual drought.

Before we read the text, I want to give you some interesting context. I nerded out about this and so just stick with me. It's important about who wrote this Psalm. You see, this Psalm was written by the sons of Korah, who were essentially worship leaders in the time of King David. Think worship leaders like people that are up on the stage leading us in song. This was one of the worship leaders back in the day who had written songs of worship. Specifically, these sons of Korah come from the lineage of Levi. Levi was one of the twelve tribes of Israel. He had a son named Koath. I put this on the screen so you can follow me here.

Levi had a son named Koath and the Kohathites oversaw caring for the sanctuary. Eventually one of the Kohathites was named Korah. And Korah, specifically, is the person that led a rebellion against Moses and God destroyed. It's one of those crazy stories in the Old Testament that you're reading and you're like what is happening. That's what happens. But God preserves the sons of Korah and seven generations later we get Samuel - the prophet Samuel. And then a few generations after that, David assigns some of the sons of Korah to be worship leaders and they

write songs. And so, I've given you these generations, it's not exactly, you know, one generation between each of them. There are differences in time, but that is who wrote this song - some worship leaders.

So, as we read it, let me pray as we approach the text this morning. Father, we do just come to you humbly to your word. Would it be our authority? Would your spirit move in this time. Help us learn a response when we pant and thirst for you and we are left longing. Would you prepare us for those seasons? Would you encourage us if we're in that season right now? And for any of my friends that are here that don't know you, don't know the hope that we have in you, Jesus, would they see their need for you Jesus, this morning. We love you and pray this in His name. Amen.

Psalm 42:1,

**¹As a deer pants for flowing streams,
so pants my soul for you, O God.**

**²My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.**

When shall I come and appear before God?^[b]

**³My tears have been my food
day and night,**

**while they say to me [my enemies say to me] all the day long,
“Where is your God?”**

**⁴These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:**

**how I would go with the throng
and lead them in procession to the house of God**

Remember a worship leader who would lead the people into the procession of the House of God.

**with glad shouts and songs of praise,
a multitude keeping festival.**

You see, I love this first verse describing a deer panting for flowing streams. This passage is showing us there are going to be seasons of the Christian life where you're following Jesus, you're longing for Jesus, you're looking for Jesus, you're thirsting for Jesus, and the stream has dried up; the well has dried up. This is spiritual drought - when God feels far, you feel alone, you feel apathetic towards obedience. You will go to the water, and it doesn't seem like it is there. My first point is a simple encouragement that longing for God is normal.

1. Longing for God is normal.

There will be seasons where we long for God and we won't immediately be satisfied. You won't immediately be satisfied. We will wonder where the water will be. You see, this passage has a built-in image about deer, a deer going to water. In fact, I took a picture of a deer in the drought last July. Here's a picture when I lived on a farm in a back house before I moved. Here's the deer

just finding water. Here's the thing about deer, I don't know much, but what I do know is they're not that dumb. They know how to find water. This deer isn't thirsty cause it doesn't know where to find water. The deer is thirsty because it's going where it knows water should be and the water is not there. The water is not where it usually is found.

For us, just think about all the times, I don't know if you've ever experienced, where you go get water from your fridge and then one day it starts to squirt a little bit weird. You're like, "Wait, there's something wrong with my refrigerator. It's not giving me water the way it used to." And then one day it just stops. And if you're a handyman, or you've ever experienced this, you know that probably the pipes froze. It's happened to me before. I don't know if it's ever happened to you, but if yours doesn't work, it could be frozen. Call a handyman.

So, here's the deal, it's like going to a place where you know there should be water and all of a sudden one day it's not there. The way it looks in our spiritual life is the way I have already described it. It's when we open the Bible, we have our cup of coffee, we're at our spot and it doesn't hit the spot. We are at worship; it doesn't feel the same. We're at Life Group and you are just like, "man, I would rather be anywhere else. This isn't quite as fun as it used to be. It's not as exciting as it used to be". Maybe you're listening to some podcasts, maybe More Than Roommates or maybe Becoming Something and you turn it on and you are like 'That just wasn't as good.' Right? It just didn't hit the way some other ones hit. That's what a season of spiritual drought could look like.

So, my first encouragement is that it is normal. Keep going to the water. Keep pursuing the Lord. All droughts in the history of droughts and in the history of the world have come to an end, that's the good news.

And the next valid thought is why would God allow this? Like theologically how could He? Why does He do these things? I think the first thing of thirsting for God and longing for God, at least here the Old Testament, is it just points to the need for Jesus. In the Old Testament, as they long for Messiah and they're thirsting for God, there is a way that that thirst will be quenched in the one who is the Water of Life, the bread of Life. It's pointing to Jesus.

Then there's the second thing for those of us that know Jesus, who are longing for Jesus and thirst for Jesus, and we don't feel like Jesus is there. It's OK. There will be seasons like that. And it's so that we could pursue him and love Him. So, He can teach us to love Him even when He doesn't give us the feeling. Teaching us to pursue Him and love Him even when we don't feel like it. So that we might love Him for who He is, not for what He gives us - not just His benefits. And Jesus tells us He does this to prune us, so that we may bear more fruit. We can trust in those dry seasons that it's so one day we can bear more fruit. We can be ready.

So, there's good news that longing for God is normal. And as I studied this passage and I saw other passages, I know that as we seek God, we're promised that God will seek us. But what I realized about all those passages that describe this, they all include some sort of perseverance or diligence or waiting. Proverbs 8:17 says those who diligently seek Him, will find Him. Deuteronomy 4:29 says if you search for Him with your whole heart and soul. Luke 11:9-10 says

don't just ask and get. It's ask and then seek and then knock and then... Jeremiah 29:13 says you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all of your heart.

It's not just an ask then get, there's a perseverance. The longing is normal. But there are times in drought where it's on us. Where it's our fault. And so, the first question we can ask ourselves in this spiritual drought, just to assess if it's on us, is 'Am I pursuing God in the ways I know I ought to? Am I spending time in God's word? Am I praying? Am I part of community? Am I meeting regularly in community? Am I gathering with other believers on Sundays? Am I learning from God's word?' You can ask yourself, am I pursuing God in the ways that I know I ought to? Then, we can ask ourselves, are we hiding sin? Are we hiding any sin? The question is, is there any 2% that we haven't brought to the light? You see sin can cause spiritual drought. Hiding sin can cause spiritual drought. Not doing the disciplines of the Lord can cause spiritual drought, but then for those that are like, 'Hey, I'm doing the disciplines and I don't think I'm hiding sin. What about me?' And I just want you to that sometimes there just is spiritual drought and it's no one's fault. It's no one's fault.

I love the way the late Tim Keller talked about this. He said, as Americans, we have to blame somebody every time something happens. We're professionals at finding out who is to blame, whose fault it is, and then we're going to sue them. We love that. That's the way everything in life works. It's somebody's fault. We got to blame... So, the first thought in spiritual drought is 'Is it my fault?' The next thought is, 'Is it God's fault?' And here's what Tim Keller said. He is like, 'Hey, it's not anyone's fault. He's just sovereign over it.' God is sovereign over it. There will be seasons of drought that God is sovereign over, and they're normal. And I want to encourage you, and that might not sound encouraging - but one day when you're in it, it will be encouraging. You can encourage somebody in your Life Group, or in your life that's going through spiritual drought. It's OK. It's OK. Keep being faithful. So first we see that the longing is normal, but if we stop here, it's somewhat impractical. Let's keep reading to see what we can do in spiritual drought. Verse 5,

**⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation^l ⁶ and my God.
My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.**

That's where the worship leader, the Psalmist is - from the land of Jordan and from Mount Mizar.

**⁷ Deep calls to deep
at the roar of your waterfalls;
all your breakers and your waves
have gone over me.
⁸ By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,**

a prayer to the God of my life.
9 I say to God, my rock:
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning
because of the oppression of the enemy?”
10 As with a deadly wound in my bones,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me all the day long,
“Where is your God?”

The Psalmist is cast down: depressed and anxious. Their soul is in turmoil within them. Their life feels as if roaring waterfalls are falling over them. It is loud and waves keep crashing over them, over and over and over again.

Jonah mentions this in Jonah 2 which we learned about a few months ago in our series through Jonah. He mentions this feeling of the waves crashing over him as he prayed from the belly of the fish. This is serious spiritual drought. Emotionally drained. On empty.

My favorite line, that I want us to focus on this morning, is verse 9. **I say to God, my rock.** See, there's honor. 'You're God. You are my God. You're in control.' Then the next phrase, **“Why have you forgotten me?”** Where are you? You're my rock, but where are you? This sounds like he's talking out of both sides of his mouth, and that's what I love! There's honor because it's God, and there's honesty because he is feeling in a way that he is frustrated. Where are you? That's the second point this morning that we are meant to lament, which is just to express, lament to God with honor and with honesty.

2. *Lament to God with honor and honesty.*

I love all the honor throughout this song. The psalmist describes God as the living God. He describes God's steadfast love - the God of my life, God my rock. There's so much honor and yet there is so much honesty. “Hello God, where are you? Why are my enemies making fun of me? This isn't a good look on God's people.” They're saying, ‘where is my God?’. That's what the haters are saying. The Psalmist is showing us that we can lament to God with honor and honesty.

The best relationships in life are marked by this combination of honor and honesty. Just think about marriage. You know, honor and honesty. It's like my wife and I are having a discussion. We need to work through something. I'm going to honor her, “Honey, I love you. That's not going to change, but there's something I need to talk about with you. I have got to be honest. You need to stay on your side of the bed in the middle of the night because you're an absolute furnace. It's impossible to sleep next to you.” Right? Am I the only one? OK. Yeah. I need to honor my wife as we work through challenges, and then I honestly have to communicate towards the things that are going on. And that's a silly example, but it gets much more real when it's like, “Hey, honey, I love you. I care so much about you. Where are you? Where have you been?” Or “Hey, you're my friend. I love you. I care about you. You're in our Life Group. We're on the same team. Where have you been? You haven't been present. You've been working too much. You have been golfing too much. You have been on your phone too much.”

The healthiest relationships have that honor and have that honesty. And I think, God is inviting us to have that healthy relationship with Him as we approach Him with honor and fear and honesty as we're going through things that we're lamenting. And so, I want to just invite you to lament as you go through things that are challenging, whether it be you pouring out your soul in infertility. It's honor and honesty. When you lose your job – it is honor and honesty. When your family is falling apart because of divorce - it's honor and honesty. When you lose a parent or a loved one - it's crying out to God with honor and honesty. We are meant to lament to God with honor and honesty.

Honesty, because he already knows. He already knows your thoughts. He already knows what you're thinking. He already knows how you feel. He already knows the fullness of your frustration. And then honor, because as we learned in our last series on awe - because He is good. He's in control. He's all powerful. We ought to fear Him. He is good. He is sovereign, even when we don't feel like it.

God is inviting us, in this psalm, to lament in this way. The Bible has a real-life example of this and the sons of Korah would have known about this. You see in those generations that I mentioned previously there was a woman named Hannah who cried out to God. The scripture says in 1 Samuel 1 she poured out her soul to God and she was pouring out her soul to God because of the infertility that she was experiencing. With honesty and with honor she poured out her soul. The sons of Korah are in this lineage. These worship leaders would come later from that same family. These writers know. They know the pain.

So, we can lament with honor and honesty and let's look to our last response in spiritual drought. Verse 11, it is also in verse 5 – it is repeated.

**¹¹ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation and my God.**

The third thing we must know as we respond to spiritual drought is:

3. Lift yourself up with hope.

Lift yourself up with hope. That's what the psalmist is doing halfway through the song. The Psalmist reminds himself of what's true. Hopes in God. My hope is in God. I will again praise God. He's my salvation. He's my God. He's just reminding himself of truth. He's singing truth not just once, but twice. It's almost like we're forgetful people and we need to continuously remind ourselves of what is true. We must continually lift ourselves up with hope.

I have a friend who's amazing at this! In fact, it's funny that he's amazing at this because he has a terrible voice, but his name is Charlie Ramsey. He works for Baylor and probably a few of you may know of him, but Charlie and I were in Southeast Asia a few years ago helping with some church plants there. I shared a room with him and whenever we would wake up, he was just singing. He just woke up singing songs and hymns and spiritual songs. It's almost like he

believed the Bible and obeyed it. So, he would just wake up singing songs and was filled with joy. He's one of the most amazing people in the world and I really, really believe he is so good at just lifting himself up with hope. He is somebody that I'm reminded of when I think about this. Because this is a song. That's why we sing on Sundays, even when we don't feel like it - to remind ourselves of what is true. I'm going to sing in the middle of the storm (sung by Dale Wallace).

That's terrible, I know, but that's what we're here for! To sing even when we don't feel like it. And then as we go about our days, sing through our days and worship and even just remind ourselves of the truth. Even if you just say the simple thing, 'I hope in God for I shall again praise Him. He's my salvation and He's my God.' Even if you just remind yourself of that truth alone, daily, it will help lift up your soul and to find hope again.

And what's crazy is the world gets self-talk right! I don't know if you all have seen social media recently. Daily affirmations are at an all-time high. Like it's a researched thing that the government would tell you to do, psychologists would tell you to do. It is a way to lift up your soul. So, people are all over the Internet saying, 'I am successful, and I am strong.' And I'm like that's subjective right? Do I look strong? What a funny thing and it's not funny because it actually is working for so many people, but the reality is that's all about self and this is all about God.

We lift up our souls with hope by reminding ourselves of who God is. We point to the thing that's objective, unchanging - God. My hope is in God, not in my strength, but in God! That's what we do daily as we remind ourselves of truth and we sing these things to ourselves. Why? Because these are hard times. There are seasons that feel like spiritual drought. We have to remind ourselves in those seasons of what is true. So, we lift ourselves with hope; not just once, but over and over again, day after day. Because sometimes those seasons of drought last a long time. And Waco, it's been almost a year. So, I don't know what your drought might be or what your challenge may be that you're working through, but it may take time. But I know if it's not good, then God's not done. If it's not fixed, then God is not finished. If it won't be on Earth, it will all be restored in eternity. You can rest assured of that.

Lastly, we have this ultimate hope. It's not just a little thing, really. It is the ultimate hope that we get in Jesus. Who gives us these things of newness of life? The promises that all things will be made new, that by His wounds we will be healed. Those things are true because of the cross of Jesus - that's where our hope is found. So, we must remind ourselves of this truth and of this hope. We should be the most hopped filled people in the world as we respond to spiritual drought.

Would we - in summary - long for God and know that it's normal. Would we lament to God with honor and honesty. And would we preach to ourselves hope as we go about our days.

In the late 1800s, there was a wealthy Chicago businessman named Horatio. Horatio and his family were going through a challenging time where they had lost a family member and to be encouraged, they just prepared themselves to go to England to visit a man named D.L. Moody. So, as their family got ready to go visit D.L. Moody, they're getting ready, and Horatio had some

business come up so he sent his family along to England before he could join. And what ends up happening is his four daughters and his wife get onto a boat, headed to England, to visit D.L. Moody and on the way the boat sank. In the wreckage, rescuers found his wife unconscious on a plank of wood. She was rescued and sent to England, and she wrote to Horatio - Saved alone. What shall I do? So, Horatio receives this note. Devastated, he makes his way towards England. He gets on the next boat to England to go and be with his wife in this time of mourning and lament. As they're crossing over the ocean, the captain pulls him aside, in kindness, and says 'This is where the boat went down. This is where your daughters went down.' And it is in that spot that he went down into the boat to write and penned himself a reminder. A lament that's filled with honor and honesty - that was meant to lift himself up in hope.

And it's there in the boat, at the water graves of his family, that he penned these words.

When peace like a river, attendeth my way
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well, with my soul
It is well
With my soul
It is well, it is well with my soul
Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come
Let this blest assurance control
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate
And hath shed His own blood for my soul
It is well (it is well)
With my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well with my soul
My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, o my soul!
It is well (it is well)
With my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well with my soul
It is well (it is well)
With my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well with my soul.