

Honesty with God, Psalm 13

In Psalm 13, David, the man after God's own heart, was on the verge of despair. Do you remember such a time? God did not act when you thought He should or in the way He should act. Praying for healing for a sick wife...nothing. Faithful to serve God, but reputation slandered. Praying for change, and it comes...yet in a different way that you pictured. No job to support family? Spiritual dryness or addiction or your child is...?

*Where do I go when I'm **disappointed** in God? Especially in His timing.*

Most of the 150 Psalms fall into one of three categories, *lament*, *petition* (prayer), or *worship* (praise/thanksgiving). *Lament*, the voice of raw emotions; *petition*, the voice of asking, dependence, awareness of need; *worship*, the voice of enthusiastic love. In **one** Psalm of only six verses, **Psalm 13** weaves together all three as a powerful model for how we do life with God when life pushes and shoves, and we spiral down.

1. **The Voice of LAMENT** (Psalm 13:1-2): David complained about how God treated Him, *and also* chose to lean hard into God with every ounce of his disappointment. David brought all his honest, raw pain with Him into God's presence. No careful wording to avoid "offending" God. God meets us in our raw emotions (He already knows all our thoughts anyway).

Four times David bemoans God's failure to act in a timely manner, according to David's sense of timing, "*How long, O LORD....*" *Lament Psalms* are honest, vulnerable. God invites us to bring to God our authentic emotions of anger, bargaining, or grief. Even though they are an inaccurate view of life. I call these the "*poor-me*" Psalms because they often reflect this self-focus prodded by internal or external pain.

Lament expresses honest doubt about God. God seems to have failed us. Although such thoughts reflect a temporarily broken inner spiritual compass, don't bury these feelings! Even if they are inaccurate, they are **ours**. Our Father experiences great delight when His children climb up on His lap and pour out our hearts. It's who He is. Yes, life often deals us bad cards. But how do we play our cards?

These opportunities present God with a powerful means to move us toward fuller spiritual life...if we lean in. Take off the fig leaf. Don't hide. Don't whitewash or sanitize your feelings or words. Bring all these raw emotions into God's presence, just as they are, raw, unfiltered, like David. "*How long, O LORD, will I be forgotten, abandoned, left alone to my own thoughts, and defeated?*"

As I carefully examine each of these phrases in verses 1-2, *none* of them may actually align with God-Reality. Could our God ever forget His beloved child or friend? Is God really hiding His face? If you wonder, return to the *three essential questions* to reorient.

These powerful emotions may not always be *accurate*, but in lament they are *authentic*, both *real* and *raw*. Self-focus distorts our reality (note the seven first person pronouns in two verses). Whatever we are feeling, whatever words we are thinking, bring these with us as we rush into God's presence. He can take it! A love

relation only thrives in emotional honesty. God is not fragile! And He loves us unconditionally.

2. **The Voice of PETITION** (Psalm 13:3-4): We also cannot settle in *lament*, drinking our bitter dregs at our private pity-party. We must rush to God with our desires, or we take on a victim mentality. God is **good**, always for us, able to act in *this* horrific circumstance for our highest and best. God does good...always... because He is good. Yes, this leaves us with mystery and confusion...and doubt when we insist on our own spin.

What boldness in this God-seeker!

“Look.” “Answer.” “Give light.” All are commands to our sovereign Lord.

How come?

God slipped His wedding ring on our finger. Petitions are pleas asking for what we need, and what only our Groom can supply. God’s answers transform our **mind**. God delights to give us good things (James 1:17). It’s who He is. As I ask, He either answers or my verbalizing often brings me light, so I adjust my focus. At its essence, prayer of petition is like a child rushing into a good father’s presence and asking. It’s basic language, never requiring flowery words. God insists that we ask Him, or the powerful pull of pain will pull us back to lament (3b-4). David makes three requests in prayer.

- **“Look!”** Nothing is more crucial when we struggle than to know that our caring Father sees. Our struggles are not hidden in darkness. He never turns His back on us. An instant never exists when His eyes are not on us.
- **“Answer!”** My mind seeks answers, and I only have one Source for accurate perspective, the Lord Himself.
- **“Give light!”** When I struggle, I feel the darkness closing in, unable to find a pathway out. I desperately need God to shine the light of His love on my circumstances so I can follow the light out. When I experience a cave-in and all is dark, the way out is to *“follow the light.”* Find that crack of light and move towards the opening.

Did you notice what’s happening with David? David leaned hard into God with His doubts and pain. Then he leaned hard into God with his perceived needs. Yet again he chooses to lean in hard to God.

3. **The Voice of PRAISE** (Psalm 13:3-4): David leans in close, face to face with the living God with the ringing enthusiasm of worship. Trust. Unfailing love. Rejoicing. Singing because the Lord has been *“good to me.”* This is not simply a theological statement like in Psalm 73:1. It’s the ringing declaration of one of God’s beloved people designed as a worshipper in touch with God’s delight. David has come home, to our only true home, resting in the God who is for us...always.

*What changed in his **outward** circumstances between verses 1-2 and 5-6? We might imagine, “The surrounding armies must have retreated.” Or “God miraculously intervened, perhaps like with Elisha’s servant and the surrounding angel host.”*

However, projecting the limitations of our faithless experience on Scripture ends up nullifying its power for us and blinding us to God’s unfailing love. I see **nothing**

in the Psalm itself that demands us imposing a change in outward circumstances on it.

This is the power of Psalm 13.

As God's people, we are not driven by outward circumstances like a cork bobbing on the waves. *From pouting to praise* without outward changes. David had learned to turn His heart to the Lord and His surrounding love...regardless of the event.

Benefits from Psalm 13

First, Psalm 13 has now become my life-posture (when I'm spiritually sane). It's a model to *melt* into His embrace. If I'm struggling, I embrace Him with *lament* and move to *petition* and *praise*. If I'm in need, with *petition* and move to *praise*. If soaring through life in this season with the wind filling my sails, *praise*. In each and every season, my choices to lean in determine my heart response, *not* outward people or events. ***Which season are you in now?***

Second, Psalms as a whole, and *Lament Psalms* in particular, have given me language to express to God the whole range of my emotions. I feel these emotions, yet it's tough for me to put them into words. Psalms discloses the whole range of human emotions, from deep despair to restful petition and exultant praise. Psalms lends me language to express.

Third, beyond that, I was saved into a Christian culture that had a partial view on emotions and feelings, that is, they don't drive our spiritual lives. That was good. However, they also modeled and/or taught me to devalue my *lament*-type of feelings. "*Real men don't cry*" goes the lie. I now honor my lament feelings of discouragement or despair with its desire to give up. I bring these to God honestly, transparently in all their rawness like David did. I acknowledge that they are real *to me* although often inaccurate and a poor guide. With this *awareness*, I now move on to *investigate* through prayer and God's truth then *do* this truth as I shift to praise... without anything changing externally.

Fourth, *Lament Psalms* have recently helped me immensely in my Christian life in a arena that I struggled with because of my passion to be like Jesus yet with "*flesh*" tendencies towards perfectionism. Psalm 13 gives me permission to *wobble* when life slaps me around and God seems slow to respond. As someone who has walked with Jesus for a long time, it's still OK when I feel sorry for myself. Yet also bring this self-focus in all its rawness quickly to God. I don't have to first get my act in order before coming to God. I don't have to first clean up. God can handle my raw feelings, even when they are not accurate, just so they are honest.