

iv. Change your comparisons.

v. Clarify your definition of good! Anchor it in something lasting, not fleeting; in nearness to God, for distance from God is death!

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Have you ever felt like your faith was slipping? ... like you were losing your footing and about to fall?
- Why do you think that envying or fretting over the prosperity of the wicked (Psalm 37:1) can lead to a crisis like that which we see in Psalm 73?
- In Psalm 73:1,2 the psalmist talks as if he is separated from Israel, the people of God. When your faith is being tested, do you ever feel isolated from the people of God? Have you ever seen that as part of the temptation?
- How does what we dwell on, the kinds of comparisons we make, either lead to discontent and a faith crisis, or to contentment and joy in God?
- What are some of the things that led to a crisis of faith for the psalmist in this psalm?
- What are the five steps outlined for walking out of a crisis of faith and back to a faith set on solid ground? Explain each.
- Explain this statement: *When we pursue our doubts alone, our doubts grow. But when we pursue our doubts in the presence of God, our doubts flee and our faith becomes strong.*

Walking Through a Crisis of Faith

Jerry Cisar — March 20, 2016

Text: Psalm 73

Introduction

I. A Psalm to Walk Us Through a Crisis of Faith

A. What is a crisis of faith?

i. A crisis of faith is a fight of faith; it is that experience in which you feel like you are in danger of giving up on your faith; as if your faith is slipping. (vs. 2, 13, 21)

ii. A test of faith often brings on a sense of isolation.

John Calvin: *"There is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are known to be agitated."*

Tremper Longman: *"It sometimes appears that the psalmist changed his negative feelings to positive ones in a brief moment, but this isn't how it happened. The Psalms compress time in such a way that what was a long process appears as a sudden insight."*

B. Some would never admit they are having a crisis of faith.

i. Biblical faith is trust that what the Lord promises is true, despite how things appear.

- a) The power of faith is not found in our faith, but in the validity of the Lord's promises.
- b) A crisis begins when our struggles lead us to think that God's promises are vain and pointless.
- ii. The Psalmist faces a crisis of faith in this psalm and leads us through our own crisis as we follow his example.

II. The Path that Leads to a Crisis of Faith

A. What led the psalmist down the path to a crisis of faith?

- i. He began to do what Psalm 37:1 tells us not to do.
 - a) We see this clearly in v3-5.
 - b) Matthew 6:24; 16:26
 - c) Asaph's envy reveals his sinful desire for the rewards of the wicked, and exposes his sense of futility in remaining pure.
- ii. The enemy used what he saw to deceive him.

B. All it takes is a sense that the wicked have it better.

C. This kind of *faith crisis* falls into the 3rd category of those in the parable of the sower. (Mark 4:19)

III. The Path the Leads Out of a Crisis of Faith

A. How did the psalmist recover? (v17)

- i. He fled to the throne of God!
- ii. The Psalmist turned his thoughts onto God. (18-20)
 - a) Surely... (1, 13, 18)
 - b) Before God, the prosperity of the wicked is cast off like a dream.
 - c) Before God, doubt is exposed as foolish. (21-22)
- iii. He recounted covenant truth to himself. (23-24)
- iv. He changed His comparisons. (25-27)
- v. He clarified his definition of good. (28)
- B. How do we/you recover from a crisis of faith?
 - i. Flee to the throne of God for help. (Hebrews 4:14-16)
 - ii. Turn your thoughts onto God and consider the precarious position of *the wicked* and the folly of your doubts.
 - iii. Recount the truths of the Gospel: The truths of your eternal hope which "*is laid up in heaven... and cannot perish, spoil or fade!*"