

## **How Long? - Growth Group Study**

5 5 2019 John Malcolm

Bible Readings: Psalm 13:1–6 & Matthew 26:36–46

**Why is it, when you are waiting for something good time drags by slowly and when you are really enjoying something time flies by quickly?**

Discuss a time/situation you had to wait a long time.

How did you feel about that?

Was it worth the wait?

**In the Old Testament, the question “how long” is a question of lament, of longing and of hope in the midst of hopelessness. In the shadow of the Christchurch mosque shooting and Easter bombings in Sri Lanka many people might be lamenting world events and asking How Long?**

What are your thoughts arising from the police escort given to our Easter procession through Mt Eden?

How do you respond to the words of Pope Francis that we are living in *a new era of martyrdom* or to the Easter message of Jeremy Hunt the foreign secretary of Great Britain, in his Easter message on 21 April, said, *Of all the people who suffer persecution for their faith, it may surprise some to know that the greatest number are Christian.*

How do we, having experienced decades of security in New Zealand, respond to the heightened security following such tragic events?

**Take a moment to read each of these passages from the Psalms – what do you think the writer is feeling in each of them?**

Psalm 6:3

Psalm 13:1–2

Psalm 79:5

Psalm 80:4

Psalm 89:46

Psalm 90:13

Psalm 119:84

How might the feelings of the Psalmist be similar to those experienced by people in our day?

How might the questions reveal the Psalmists faith?

Why might people feel they shouldn't ask God this type of question?

Why do you think the bible contains laments and questions that reveal woundedness and weakness?

How do these passages help us when we are living through difficult times?

**Read Matthew 26:36–46 & Luke 22:44**

What do you think was on Jesus heart and was going through his mind as he prayed in the garden?

If Jesus was following God's will for his life, why was he anxious and wrestling in prayer?

*Here we see the frightened Jesus fall on his face,  
begging God to take away the cup of suffering.*

Craig Evans

*The victory of the cross at Golgotha was first won through prayer in the garden of Gethsemane.*

Would you agree/disagree with this? (Explain your reasoning)

**Read Mark 15:34 & Psalm 22:1–2**

With his penultimate breath Jesus prays quoting a psalm. What do we learn about Jesus from this moment?

Do you think Jesus quotes this from a depth of faith or a lack of faith? (Discuss your view with the group)

**Read Revelation 6:10–11**

What do we learn from the last "how long" in the bible?

What is God's response to the question "how long"?

*The minister said, Christian faith is not so thin nor fragile that it is only for when the sun shines, when life is rosy, and all is well in the world. Christianity is not a Facebook bubble of delight and ease, with pictures of wonderful meals and smiling friends in exotic locations. Christianity is about **real** life even when life is hard. Christian faith can enter into and weather the storms life.*

**Read 2 Corinthians 4:8–9**

What do we learn here about Paul's experience of life?

Why do you think the difficult experiences he had faced did not crush him?

What do we learn from:

2 Corinthians 1.3,

1 Peter 5.7,

Ephesians 2.4,

Matthew 11.29

In your experience are the lessons from the verses above theoretical or practical?  
Explain your answer.

**Personal reflection:**

Take a moment to consider or write down the hard questions which are swirling around our world, and then take them to God in prayer.

**Resource:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/notre-dame-was-a-tragedy-but-in-too-many-parts-of-the-world-its-the-christian-congregation-that-perishes-article-by-jeremy-hunt>