

## Psalm 42: (ESV): As the Deer Pants for Water

**Main point:** When your soul is downcast, turn to God.

**Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.**



**Background:** Written by (or for) David as a song “to the choirmaster, a Maskil (probably a musical term) of the Sons of Korah,” a priestly family of singers with David in exile.

### Focus of the study:

<sup>1</sup> As a deer pants for flowing streams,  
so pants my soul for you, O God.

<sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God?

<sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while [my enemies] say to me all the day long,  
“Where is your God?”

<sup>4</sup> These 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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 <sup>6</sup> and my God.

### Questions:

1. *At the time of this Psalm, David, the leader of the Hebrew people, is in exile from his home and people – what would that mean? If you were exiled from your home and country, how would you feel? What would you miss?*
  - a. Alone, lonely, sad, confused, angry
  - b. David is cut off, unable to worship God in community with his people
  - c. Missing your favorite things: foods; ease of life; not being chased; security; community
2. *But what does David say is his primary need (not luxury)?*
  - a. v. 1-2: communion with God – like water to a thirsty deer
  - b. He must drink or die; he must have God’s presence or faint away
3. *What does it feel like when you’re thirsty?*
  - a. Intense craving! not quite the same as hunger; more urgent, even life and death
4. *What does David thirst for?*
  - a. v. 2: the living God, “living water”
5. *v. 3-4 (read again): What does David say he’s doing day and night?*
  - a. Crying! Why?

- i. feels cut off, heartsick, like dying of thirst
      - ii. taunted by his enemies, who think no help is coming from God
    - b. “pouring out his soul” – I wonder what that means?
    - c. v. 4: *What and who does David say he misses?*
      - i. the throng, the procession, a multitude
      - ii. glad songs and shouts of praise to God
    - d. *Does David say he misses the honor and glory to himself as the leader of the people?*
      - i. No; misses leading his people in worship of God
  - 6. *So what’s the overall mood of this psalm? Does it sound like David is in triumph and “everything is great”?*
    - a. This is a heartfelt song of complaint, sadness, yearning, heartsick, thirsty
    - b. *Do you ever feel this way? Why do we sometimes feel this way?*
  - 7. v. 5: *What is David question to himself? In verse 5, he seems to come to his senses:*
    - a. “Why are you cast down? Why in turmoil?”
  - 8. *What does David realize is coming in the future? Who is David’s sure hope?*
    - a. David puts his hope in GOD, that he will again praise God
    - b. David knows that his salvation and restoration are in God alone
  - 9. *Who appears to have the power in David’s situation?*
    - a. The people pursuing him, his enemies, keeping him in exile
    - b. *But who really has the power? God!*
  - 10. *When we are in distress, what is our temptation?*
    - a. It’s easy to complain, lose hope, try to work our way out of it alone, “pity party,” asking “why me”
    - b. And we’ve got company! Many of the psalms are full of *complaint*, asking God “what’s happening? Where are you??”
  - 11. *When we feel downcast, what should we preach to ourselves and to each other? Who is with you/us at all times, working to restore you/us?*
    - a. Hope in and praise God; God is with you, never leaving you.
- Ask for any prayer requests for today.
  - Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
  - End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

## Psalm 42: 1-5

<sup>1</sup> As a deer pants for flowing streams,  
so pants my soul for you, O God.

<sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God?

<sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while [my enemies] say to me all the day long,  
“Where is your God?”

<sup>4</sup> These 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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 <sup>6</sup> and my God.