

Lesson 6

Restoration, Character, and Suffering (Psalms 85-88)

1. What prompts the psalmist to ask God for restoration in Psalm 85:4? If God has just returned the Israelites to their land after a long season of captivity, how might this have contributed to the plea? What would have led the psalmist to ask, “Will you be angry with us forever” (v. 5)?
2. Choose one verse or phrase from Psalms 85—88 that stands out to you. This could be something you’re intrigued by, something that makes you uncomfortable, something that puzzles you, something that resonates with you, or just something you want to examine further. Write that here.
3. What does Psalm 85 teach us about the importance and role of corporate worship? How does it also illustrate the role of individual worship? How do the two work together in the life of the believer?
4. How might Psalm 85:10–13 reveal a glimpse of the coming Christ? What does it mean that “righteousness and peace kiss each other”? What does the phrase “faithfulness springs forth from the earth” refer to?
5. What does the manner in which Psalm 86 was written (collected quotations from other chapters) say about its author? About the circumstances that prompted David to write this? How is this approach similar to the way Christians today find encouragement in others’ writings?
6. Circle phrases or words that describe God’s character in Psalm 86. When do we learn most about God’s character? What wisdom about God’s character do you find in this psalm?

7. Read the related Scripture passages in the previous commentary excerpt. How do these help to shed light on the meaning of Psalm 87? What does this teach us about the intricate nature of God's plan for His people?
8. Go through Psalm 88 and circle the references to suffering. What does this tell you about the psalmist's circumstances? Why is it important for the book of Psalms to include darker psalms like this one? What does this tell us about the importance of freely expressing despair to God?
9. Why do people seek quick fixes to pain? What does secular culture offer as an answer to pain? Why will this always come up short without the healing truth of God's Word?
10. Read Job 13:15. How does this verse apply to the psalmist's situation in Psalm 88? What does it tell us that the psalmist, even though he is suffering, is still reaching out to God for an answer? What does this psalm say about the role of questions, and even of complaints, in the Christian life?
11. Describe a season in life when you longed for restoration. What led up to that desire? Have you ever felt like God was angry with you? What did you do with this feeling? What are the steps you need to take to find restoration and resolution?
12. Describe a time when you were "poor and needy" as David was when he wrote Psalm 86. What sources of comfort and encouragement did you draw from to move toward a place of peace?
13. If you've ever felt like the author of Psalm 88, what prompted that feeling? How do you deal with seasons of suffering? How do you deal with the suffering of those close to you? How can you keep pursuing God like the psalmist—in practical ways—when you're experiencing suffering?
14. Think of one or two things that you have learned that you'd like to work on in the coming week. Remember that this is all about quality, not quantity. It's better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work on

many and do poorly (or to be so overwhelmed that you simply don't try). **Suffering is a familiar theme in the psalms, but so is worship and praise. Take time to pray this week for those you know (and those you don't) who are suffering from various circumstances. If you're suffering right now, ask a close friend or family member to join you and include your situation in a time of prayer.**

15. Write a prayer below (or simply pray one in silence), inviting God to work on your mind and heart in those areas you've previously noted. Be honest about your desires and fears.