

Chapter 7

Introduction

1) Have you ever had an experience similar to that of the man in the opening illustration? Describe it.

The Morphing of Emotions

2) What does it mean that painful experiences become “lenses we use to interpret life”?

3) In the space below, answer the questions asked on the top half of page 96.

The Heat: God’s View of My World

4) What types of “dark, shocking, and painful stories abound” in Scripture? Name some examples.

5) Does the inclusion of such stories in the Bible encourage or discourage you? Why?

Alone in the Darkness?

6) In the space below, record your initial responses to Psalm 88.

Did it bother you? In what ways?

Did it encourage you? In what ways?

Did it confuse you? In what ways?

In what ways do you or don’t you identify with the author of the Psalm?

7) What five things do the book's authors suggest we can gain from this Psalm?

i.

ii.

iii.

iv.

v.

8) In the space below, answer the questions at the bottom of page 98.

9) To what degree do you feel that our church (Wednesday evening prayer meetings, Sunday evening prayer requests, Sunday School classes, general relationships, etc.) mirrors the author's small group—"the same old grocery list of situational, self-protective prayer requests masquerading as openness and self-disclosure"? How is it different?

Do you desire it to change?

In what ways might meditating on Psalm 88 help produce more honesty?

Even More Encouraging

10) Psalm 88 is a *song*. In what ways might such "dark songs" help God's people? What does this tell us about worship? Is there a danger in singing *only* songs that are "light" and "triumphant"?

Biblical Realism – James 1:1-15

11) What does James teach us about trials in verse 2?

What benefit does this knowledge have for a congregation?

12) What does James teach us about trials in verses 2-4?

13) What does James teach us about trials in verses 5-8?

14) What does James teach us about trials in verses 9-12?

15) What does James teach us about trials in verses 13-15?

16) What does James teach us about God and suffering in verses 16-18?

17) Against what “thorns,” produced by the “heat” of trials, does James warn us?

Do you see such thorns produced in your life when you encounter trials? Give examples.

18) What “fruit” ought to be produced?

Give an example of how the Lord has produced fruit through trials in your life.

You, Your Lord, and Trials

19) Read the list of common false assumptions we tend to make about suffering. Answer the questions below.

20) Read the questions about the “Heat in your current situation.” Answer them below. Be concrete and practical.