

What Do You Do When You Don't Know What to Do?

Message #1 – How Long?

Psalm 13

I want to be clear about the title of this series. The question is not what do you do when you don't know what you are doing? Many times, in life and in the Christian life we face situations in which we don't know what to do. The life of David has tremendous application to our lives today. We do not know David's particular situation as the background to this Psalm. Many connect [Psalm 13](#) to sometime during the years he was running from King Saul (4) "my enemy."

David's Questions (1-2)

Four times David asks the LORD "How long?" This question is scattered throughout the Psalms. This was also Job's repeated question. Also, a question asked in [Habakkuk 1:2](#). David was struggling with the **length** of the test he was experiencing. We need to remember that God designs both the **depth** and the **duration** of our trials.

➤ David feels forsaken (1).

David knows in his mind that God cannot forget. David is struggling with his emotions. He cannot understand why the LORD will not intervene in his situation. God never forsakes His children and He would not forsake David, [Hebrews 13:5](#).

➤ David feels isolated (1).

David is speaking in a spiritual not a literal sense. He feels that the LORD is **distant**. David is talking about the sense of God's presence.

➤ David feels confused (2).

David turns **inward** upon himself which is always unhelpful. He is perplexed and feels helpless. Emotional pain is **real** pain. David forms one plan and then another but none gives him relief.

➤ David feels vulnerable (2).

David is struggling with the inequities of life. Asaph struggled with this same issue in [Psalm 73](#). God at times appears to forget some of His choicest servants. God was building spiritual maturity in them, [Isaiah 40:31](#). Waiting times are testing times.

David's Petitions (3-4)

The Psalm begins to take a turn at this point.

➤ David expresses his faith (3).

Instead of complaining about God's apparent inattentiveness David calls out to God. This reveals David's faith in the midst of his anxieties. A real test of our faith is when God seems distant. [Psalm 39:12](#), "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry." Sinclair Ferguson, "At the end of the day we need to know He knows."

➤ David expresses his fear (3).

David fears for his life. There were occasions where Saul almost caught David and would have killed him. He is also asking for spiritual insight. David prays for physical strengthening. He also could be praying for spiritual insight as in [Psalm 19:8](#), "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Often a person's eyes can reveal what is happening in their heart.

➤ David expresses his concern (4).

David is concerned for God's glory. As God's anointed king his death would cast doubt on God's ability to protect him. David is in effect releasing his enemy to the LORD. He will focus on his relationship with God. David's real enemy is the same enemy of our souls, Satan, [1 Peter 5:8-10](#).

Derek Kidner, "Awareness of God and the enemy is virtually the hallmark of every Psalm of David; the positive and negative charge which produced the driving force of his best years."

David's Confession (5-6)

This Psalm now moves from David's depths of despair to the heights of his faith.

➤ David praises God for His mercy (5).

The word translated as "mercy" is *hesed*. The word cannot be translated with only one word. It means unending love, loyal love, covenant faithfulness, mercy, and grace. God said of David "But My **mercy** shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you," [2 Samuel 7:15](#).

➤ David praises God for His salvation (5).

David's circumstances have not changed at this point. David has changed. He lifted his gaze to contemplate the LORD. His despair is turning to praise. David confesses that the One Who saved his soul will surely save his life. He looks ahead by faith to the time when this trial will end. Part of the issue of turning things over to God is that we do not want to yield control of our lives to His providence. We like to maintain control so God allows things to come into our lives that we cannot control.

➤ David praises God for His blessings (6).

David's sadness has now turned into singing. David is praising God because of his faith not because his situation has changed. David is turning his situation over to the LORD. This brings peace and joy back into his heart. Swindoll, "Although it sounds like a cliché, our fervent petition is still the most effective oil to reduce the friction from the daily grind of despondency." David makes a conscious choice to thank God for His bountiful blessings instead of questioning God in his trial.

David's confidence returns and his song renewed.