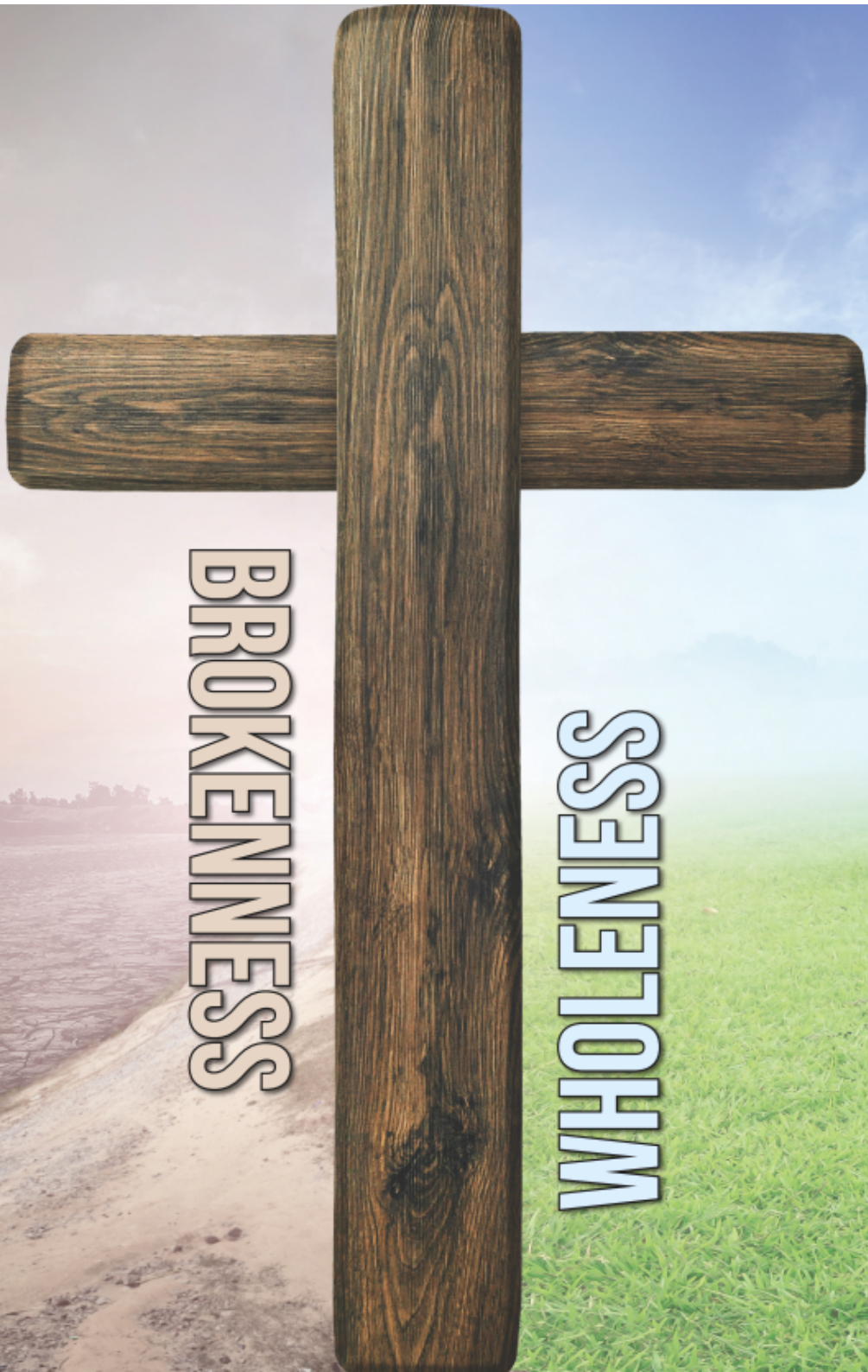


BROKENNESS

WHOLENESS



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INTRODUCTION

Life is hard. All around us people are suffering and struggling to survive. During the past year everyone has been touched by tragedy or pain to some extent – whether it was because you experienced it yourself, or your loved ones experienced it, or even if you just read about it in the news.

Tragedies and trials cause many people to question God's goodness. People start asking: *"Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? Are there explanations for the terrors and trials we face? Is God in control?"*

Brokenness can be seen everywhere — in society, culture, business, government, education and even in churches. It also exists among individuals. How is it possible to experience wholeness amidst all this brokenness? How can we survive?

Tragedies and misery cause many Christians to question their faith. Spiritual wholeness is not dependant on our actions, but on an acceptance of God's acting on our part in the life/death/resurrection of Christ. Yet we strain and strive, looking for something to fill us.

With this series we want to help you to keep your faith amidst trials and tribulations, to keep on believing that God is in charge. To remember that what you currently experience is not the end of the story, but that something greater is ahead. To remember God is never caught off guard or by surprise. God knows the future.

You are not the only one that might have felt that there is no hope. We trust that this series will help you to stand strong in your faith and to keep your hope in the Lord. Hope will become the fuel to dare to believe that the sun will indeed come out again, because of God's Son.

Soli Deo Gloria



Week **1**

God Understands and Cares about our Struggles

Memory Verse:

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

Hebrews 4:15

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Hebrews 2:14-18, 4:14-16 and 5:7-10

OPENING REMARKS:

On our journey in life, we all will have worries, hardships, or heartache from time to time. When we are hurting, or discouraged, or grieving, we yearn for someone to understand what we are going through. We may tell our friends or family about our troubles, but sometimes they can't or won't understand. We may get some relief by telling others about our situation, but often the deep pain in our heart can't be shared with anyone.

At times like this, who can we turn to? We might think even the Lord won't understand. But He can! There is no one who can understand us like God. He knows what we are going through. God is a passionate Father and through Jesus our perfect intercessor, we can share our struggles and grieves and heartaches with Him freely.

God is always aware of our pain and hardship. In Psalm 56:8 David wrote: *"You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?"* (NKJV) He knows what disappointment feels like and He knows

how stubborn mankind is. Jesus was a human Himself, He experienced grief and heartache and loneliness. He experienced what it feels to be forsaken by God.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Hebrews 2:14-18

Why has death always been a fearful thing for human beings?

Death is so final. For ages death is a dreaded enemy. Death brings men and women to the ultimate judgment for sin, as all must stand before the God. However, God has provided a “cure” for the fear of death.

Jesus brought the solution for sin and death. He suffered the punishment which our sins deserved and demanded. When we acknowledge our sin and trust in the death and resurrection of Christ in our place, then we are freed from the dread of sin and death and enter into the assurance of forgiveness and eternal life.

How is it beneficial for us that Christ was tempted like we are? What lessons can we learn from Him about how to respond to temptation?

Jesus could only substitute Himself for us if He was one of us. As a human He had to face all the temptations that all people face. He certainly knew about these temptations, but by becoming a man, He could experience them firsthand. He could identify with what we were going through. He could give us the perfect example of how to respond to it in action, not just with words. He can empathize with us in a deeper way and intercede for us more personally.

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

Jesus' ability to understand and care about our struggles is presented to us as a comfort in Hebrews. How does this comfort you specifically? How do Jesus' experiences recorded in the gospels enable Him to relate to your own experiences?

Jesus understands our weaknesses and has experienced them in his own way. He knows the pain our struggles cause us. We can feel confident reaching out to Him for help, without being overwhelmed by shame or guilt.

When Jesus' friend Lazarus died, Jesus wept for him, even though He planned to raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:35). He understands our sadness. We don't have to hide anything from God or put on a brave face. We can be ourselves and share our sadness with Him. I know it is hard to connect with God during a really difficult time. Focus on Him in prayer. He knows your heart, and cares about what you're facing right now.

Read Hebrews 5:7-10

In what areas of your life do you need to be reminded that Jesus understands what you're going through?

In the Old Testament, the high priest represented the people, as he was one of them. As a sinner himself he could gently deal with the weaknesses and sins of his people. The high priest, however, was appointed by God, he couldn't volunteer for it or be voted into this position.

Jesus is the perfect high priest, although He never sinned, He experienced hardship and emotional pain. He understands our experiences because He's been through it. Jesus obeyed his Father even when obeying meant more pain. He knows what it's like to want to get off the path of obedience and He can help us when we're tempted to do the same. He obeyed through hardship and pain.

CLOSING REMARKS:

Jesus can sympathize with us in our pain and our dying because He experienced excruciating pain and entered all the way into death. He knows the battle. He fought it all the way to the end. And He defeated death, sin and pain every time. He was tested like we are. He is a sympathetic High Priest. He does not roll his eyes at your pain and your struggles with sin.

God Is Love. God puts people in our lives to show us His love and kindness, even when we are struggling in our faith or have given up belief in Him. No matter how hard things get, or where you are in your faith, there are people who love you, care about you, and want to help you get through this painful time in your life.

PRAYER

Ask God to show you through Scripture and by the actions of people that you know that He cares and loves you.

Ask Him to replace your distress with peace and to give you strength to handle hardship and pain.

Ask God to help you to trust that He is in control when your emotions pull you down into despair.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

Hebrews 4:15

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Hebrews 2:14-18, 4:14-16 and 5:7-10

Discussion questions

Read Hebrews 2:14-15 and 1 Corinthians 15:56-57. What has happened through Christ that takes the sting from death? How does His victory over death helps you to cope in times of struggles, hardship, and heartache?

Read Hebrews 2:16-18. Why in God's plan did Jesus have to become human like us? How does his humanity provide encouragement and help to us when we are in trouble?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. In what circumstances do you find it most difficult to "hold fast to your faith?" Discuss.

Read Hebrews 5:7-10? Is it always right to pray for deliverance from a trial? How can we know what to pray?

Close in prayer



Week 2

Take courage! Do not be afraid!

Memory Verse:

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline..

2 Timothy 1:7

PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING REMARKS:

In scripture, courage is also referred to as "good cheer" (a cheerful spirit) which means boldness and confidence. Throughout the Bible, God commands us to fear not, to be of good cheer, and to have courage in our life. Sometimes we doubt our own strength and conviction, but we can turn to Scripture for the encouragement to live in good cheer and trust in God.

The goal of this study is to encourage those of us who are going through difficult times to 'take courage' and to know that God is on our side as we face the trials and sufferings of life.

Trusting in God may seem like a 'blind' leap of faith into a frighteningly unknown reality, but in reality, we can see that God has already provided for us, and will continue to do so, despite the chaos and uncertainty around us. That is why this session focuses on passages that not only encourages us to 'take courage' but also gives examples of people stepping out in faith and trusting God.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read 1 Samuel 21:10 to 1 Samuel 22:2 and Psalm 34

What stands out to you about the Psalm, considering the events that had inspired David to write it?

Compare God's actions in the situation to David's strange behaviour. What did David learn from this experience and what can we learn from him?

David realized that he was safe, not because of his own art or skill; not because of the courage of his own arm, or the abilities of his followers, but because of the goodness of God in sending an angel, or a company of angels, to rescue him. In the same way, the loneliest, the humblest, the most obscure, and the poorest child of God, may have near him/her and around him/her an army of angels to rescue and protect him/her. As children of God, we are never alone.

Read Matthew 14:22-36

Why were the disciples afraid of Jesus walking on the water?

Why did Peter start to sink?

Peter is the boldest disciple, and perhaps the best example of a very fallible human among the disciples. He reaches out to Jesus in faith, in a way knowing that he can trust Jesus for what he needs to walk on water, but in another way doubting his own ability to carry it out. What could be more human than that? We must come to that realization like Peter did that we can only navigate life - let alone walk on water- if we cry out to Jesus and surrender to Him.

Why did Jesus reach out and save Peter, even after he failed to trust in Him?

What lesson can we learn about faith from this passage? Is God looking for perfectly faithful people? What does it really take to ‘step out in faith’?

It is the nature of faith — humble, active faith — to be willing to throw oneself into a disorderly world and expect to encounter Jesus there. It is the nature of faith, even “little faith,” to want to transcend the normal “rules” and see what possibilities might be brought into being. It is the nature of faith to wonder what other supposedly unalterable outcomes Jesus might want us to take part in. It is the nature of faith even to waver from time to time, when it has stepped into stressful, unfamiliar terrain.

Because, as Peter discovered, Jesus is there where the boundaries are being redrawn, extending life-giving stability when the chaos gets the upper hand.

Read 2 Timothy 1:7-14

As Christians we have the Holy Spirit living within us. According to this verse, what difference should it make to our lives, considering that those like David in the Old

Testament did not have the Spirit with them the way that we now do?

What sort of life has God called us to, and what is the basis for that calling? (Refer to verse 9)

CLOSING REMARKS:

As believers, we do not need to be afraid. You can go about your day in courage because you trust in God.

What kind of courage? Courage to do what is right. Courage that places its trust in God. Plus, courage to keep loving and serving others. Courage to discipline your heart to be concerned more about your neighbour than yourself. Courage to have a generous mind toward others. This list of course could be much longer.

We will never have all the answers as to the trials and suffering that we are facing. Yet, we must continue to take the next step in courage for the glory of God even without knowing.

Keep your mind focused on what is true about God. Consider God's character, His control, His purpose for your life, and His presence in your life. God desires you to function under complete confidence in Him.

PRAYER

Ask God to give you a cheerful spirit – courage and strength to face each day.

Ask God to teach you to trust Him and to step out in faith.

Thank God for His promises and His mercy.

Ask Him to help you to keep your mind focused on Him and His promises.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:7

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Psalms 34:1-8, Matthew 14:22-36 and 2 Timothy 1:7-14

Discussion questions

Read Psalm 34:1-8. Share about a time in your life when God provided, protected, or blessed you when you didn't deserve it (as you may have had doubts, made a mistake, were not focused on what God was doing, etc.).

Read Matthew 14:22-36. What lesson can we learn about faith from this passage? Is God looking for perfectly faithful people? What does it really take to 'step out in faith'?

Read 2 Timothy 1:7-14. As Christians we have the Holy Spirit living within us. According to this verse, what difference should it make to our lives? Discuss.

How does our knowledge of God being faithful in the past and our trusting of Him in the present and for the future,

work together with the Holy Spirit to help us to lead the life that we've been called to?

Close in prayer



Week 3

Trusting God in tough times

Memory Verse:

... yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

Habakkuk 3:18

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Habakkuk 3:1-19

OPENING REMARKS:

Life is not predictable. There are ups and downs along the way. Many of us want to trust God. When times are good, it can feel easier. But when times feel difficult, it is even more important to trust God. God's unchanging character can give us a firm foundation when things feel unsteady and uncertain.

Life can be going along smoothly for a season. Your job is satisfying. Your friends and family are enjoyable. Your goals, finances, health, and outlook seem bright. Then life throws a curveball. Someone you know gets sick. You lose your job. A friend or family member betrays you. The things you felt secure in suddenly feel shaky and uncertain.

How do you trust that God is good in these circumstances? How do you trust Him when you do not understand what is happening, when you cannot see a resolution? These are valid questions, and God wants to help you navigate them.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

The Bible has a lot of verses that teaches us about trusting God in hard times. Read the following verses and write in your own words what it means with regards to trusting God:

Psalm 9:10	
Psalm 28:7-8	
Psalm 37:3,5	
Psalm 40:1-3	
Proverbs 3:5	

To trust is to believe in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of something. So, when it comes to trusting God, that means believing in His reliability, His Word, His ability,

and His strength. The Bible says that God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19), that He always keeps His promises (Acts 13:17-41). He loves you and has good in store for you (Jeremiah 29:11). Trusting in Him means believing what He says about Himself, about the world and about you is true.

Read Habakkuk 3:1-2

As we study Habakkuk 3, it is important to understand the context. In chapter 1, Habakkuk is saying, “God, I don’t understand.” In chapter 2, God said, “Be patient and wait.” And so, Habakkuk did wait. And even though things around him didn’t seem to be getting any better, Habakkuk is at peace in chapter 3.

So how did Habakkuk get from a place of confusion and worry and fear to a place of faith and confidence and joy? How was he able to make that transition when nothing around him changed? The people were still mocking God, violence still filled the streets, and the Babylonians were still coming to attack Jerusalem. Outwardly, everything was still as messed up as it was at the very beginning.

But something changed inside of Habakkuk.

What is Habakkuk remembering? What is he asking from the Lord?

Habakkuk starts chapter 3 by saying, “God, I know all the stories of all the amazing things you’ve done in the past. I’ve heard about your miracles; I’ve heard about your power, and I’ve heard about your glory.”

In these verses, there is a focus on God’s activity in the past. Habakkuk especially focuses on the Exodus, the time in the wilderness, and the crossing of the Jordan River. That was a time when God repeatedly performed spectacular miracles. And the implication is that if God did it before, then he can do it again.

Is being filled with awe an appropriate response to God (refer to verse 2)? The King James Translation uses the word “*fear*”. What kind of fear should we have toward God?

There are different kinds of fear. Fear can be good or bad. A healthy fear of God can lead us to understand Him better and strengthen our desire to live a holy life.

Habakkuk knew God was on His throne. All of God's power, prestige, and authority were ingrained in his mind. Habakkuk approaches God as a humble petitioner before a king, not as an equal, or worse as an adversary or challenger.

When you approach God in prayer, you should have a humble attitude. You should realize that He is on His throne, in complete power and authority. Then you will not be challenging or questioning God, but you will be seeking God's help.

Read Habakkuk 3:3-15

Why is Habakkuk thinking back to everything the Lord has done in the past?

As Habakkuk prays, he remembers all of God's great redemptive acts of the past. It helps him to remember that God had mercy on his people and has saved them in the

past. What God has already done for him thus becomes the foundation on which he builds his trust. God has helped him in the past, so why would he want to doubt now?

Think about all the times that God has helped you in the past. Does this help you to trust him? Why/why not?

Whenever I'm confused because of what's going on in my life or in the world around me, I need to remember. I need to go back to who I know God to be. Sometimes we read about everything God did in the Bible and we think that's the God that used to be. But we need to remember that the God who did all those things is the God we serve now.

Read Habakkuk 3:16

What effect did the things that he heard have on Habakkuk?

What did he decide to do?

What lessons can we learn from his decision to wait patiently in the face of such terrible trials? What can we learn about the relationship between emotions and action?

Habakkuk decided to wait patiently for what God was going to do. In Habakkuk, we can see an important relationship between emotion and action. He felt one way, distraught. But he took those emotions to God, and he decided on a different action. The way forward was not going to be filled with worry and sleepless nights and ulcers. Habakkuk simply rests in and trusts in God. Rather than fret, he would calmly and patiently wait for whatever God had in store.

Read Habakkuk 3:17

What kind of trials does Habakkuk describe here? How serious are these trials?

Habakkuk lists some of the worst trials that people faced in his days. It is sudden; it happens with no warning. It is severe. It is a financial disaster. And it is not a normal level

of trial that farmers would face. The causes are not seen. There are no answers to the question “why?” or “how?” or “why me?” Habakkuk basically describes the worst nightmare of a farmer.

Read Habakkuk 3:18

How does Habakkuk respond to the severe trials? How would most people respond to such serious trials?

What lessons can we learn from Habakkuk?

Can you describe any trials where you were able to have joy in the middle of it? What helped give you joy?

In verse 17 we see Habakkuk describe a catastrophe. There seems to be no silver lining. And yet in verse 18 we see that Habakkuk is joyful. Has something changed? Have the sheep returned? Are the fig trees finally blooming? No. Nothing has changed. The circumstances

are still bad. Therefore, we learn that true joy does not depend on circumstances. It is possible to be joyful in any situation, no matter how dire it is. And it is not only possible, but it is commanded. (Refer to 1 Thessalonians 5:16)

Read Habakkuk 3:19

How does Habakkuk describe the Lord? How does the Lord help Habakkuk through these trials?

What does it mean to have feet like a deer? What are special about a deer's feet?

What does it mean that "He enables me to go on the heights?"

Habakkuk made a promise that he would rejoice no matter what his circumstances were. He would praise God and be thankful to God even when it wasn't easy.

CLOSING REMARKS:

Trusting God is more than a feeling; it's a choice to have faith in what He says even when your feelings or circumstances would have you believe something different. Your feelings and circumstances matter and are very much worth paying attention to. God cares about them both. But those things alone are not reliable enough to base your life on. They can change at any moment, even in an instant. God, on the other hand, does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and therefore is worthy of your trust.

Trusting God is not about ignoring your feelings or reality. It is not pretending that everything is OK when it is not. Trusting God is living a life of belief in and obedience to God even when it's difficult.

We must simply make a decisive decision to TRUST God in EVERY area of our life AND to REFUSE to be moved and discouraged by our temporary circumstances in life. TODAY IS THE BEST DAY TO MAKE THIS CHOICE

PRAYER

Ask God to help you make the decision to trust Him in every area of your life.

Ask God to help you to trust Him and His promises.

Ask Him to help you to remember all the ways in which He has helped and guided you.

Ask Him to help you to persevere in your trials, with a joyful heart.

Ask God to help you to trust that He is in control when your emotions threaten to overcome your trust in Him.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

... yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

Habakkuk 3:18

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Habakkuk 3:1-19

Discussion questions

Read Habakkuk 3:1-2. What is Habakkuk asking from the Lord? Do you think we may ask God to be merciful?

Read Habakkuk 3:3-15. Share with the group about times that God has helped you in the past. Does it help you to trust Him? Why/why not?

Read Habakkuk 3:16-18. Habakkuk described the worst trials of his day. What are the worst trials that we face today? How should we respond to these trials?

Read Habakkuk 3:19. How does the Lord help us through trials? Do you think it is possible to praise the Lord despite trials and tribulations? Discuss ways we can support each other.

Close in prayer



Week 4

God stays true to His Promises

Memory Verse:

God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Numbers 23:19

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Psalm 102:12 & 25-28, Hebrews 13:8, James 1:17, Deuteronomy 7:9 and Joshua 21:43-45

OPENING REMARKS:

God is a Faithful and Unchanging God who Stays True to His promises - that is seen throughout the whole Bible. To really TRUST God, you need to accept this Biblical truth.

Faithfulness is one of the characteristics of God's ethical nature. It denotes the firmness or constancy of God in His relations with men, especially with His people. It is, accordingly, one aspect of God's truth and of His immutability. God is true not only because He is really God in contrast to all that is not God, and because He realizes the idea of Godhead, but also because He is constant or faithful in keeping His promises, and therefore is worthy of trust. God, likewise, is unchangeable in His ethical nature. The Scripture often connects this immutability with God's goodness and mercy, and with His constancy in reference to His covenant promises, and this is what the Old Testament means by the Faithfulness of God.

This week we are going to confirm it from the Bible by investigating 3 statements:

- God is the same yesterday, today and forever.
- God is Faithful - He Stays True to and Fulfills His
- Promises,
- BECAUSE: God Is Faithful to His Word

STUDY QUESTIONS:

God is the same yesterday, today and forever

Psalm 102 is a prayer of an afflicted man who is faint and pours out his lament before the LORD. This sincere prayer for help is packed with confidence that God is unchanging.

Read Psalm 102:1-7 and 11

What do you learn from the author's situation and his state of mind?

Now Read Psalm 102:12 and 25-28

What do you learn from the author's understanding of and trust in God?

At the beginning of Psalm 102, we read how the writer feels like his life is ruined. Emotionally and with poetic detail he cries out to God. After several lines, there is a shift, and we notice the psalmist turning his focus to the attributes of God, one of them being his unchanging nature. Even as his creation changes and “*will wear out like a garment*,” we can take comfort in knowing our Lord won’t change. “*But you are the same, and your years have no end*” (v 27).

Read Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8 and James 1:17

What reassurance do you find in these verses?

Unlike the sun, moon, stars, and planets (“the heavenly lights”; see Psalm 136:7–9), which regularly move and change their appearance, God never changes. We see this attribute that God is unchanging throughout the Bible.

Spurgeon (1915) wrote: *“There is no strength for us but that which comes from the Omnipotent One himself What a consolation it is that our God never changes! What He was yesterday He is today. What we find Him today we will find Him forever. Are you struggling against sin? Don’t struggle in your own strength. It is God who performs all things for you.”*

God is Faithful - He Stays True to and Fulfills His Promises

Read Hebrews 5:7-10

God’s faithfulness speaks to the core of His character. This means we can know for certain He’ll do what He says He’s going to do. We can know that the character we see Him display throughout the Bible, in Old Testament stories and New Testament teachings, remains active today.

Read the following verses confirming the truth that Scripture often connects God’s immutability with God’s goodness and mercy, and with His constancy in reference to His covenant promises. What does each of them say about God and His promises?

Genesis 28:15	
Deuteronomy 7:9	
Joshua 21:43-45	
Joshua 23:14	

Under the leadership of Joshua, God fulfilled his promises to Israel to give them a land through the conquest of Canaan and through the allocation of the land among the tribes.

God is faithful. Despite the evolving and unstable seasons that life brings, we are called to trust God. Through times of joy and tribulation, God's faithfulness remains consistent and steadfast. Life can be hard, challenging, and seem unfair. When things do not go according to our plans, we become frantic, but God remains faithful.

Read Jeremiah 29:10-14 and compare it to Ezra 1:1-4

What do you learn from these verses?

The book of Ezra recounts the return of God's people from exile and the rebuilding of the temple. After decades of captivity, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation, allowing the exiles of Judah to return home - to fulfill the words of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah. God fulfilled his promise then, and He continues to fulfill his promises today.

God completes His work, and He does not abandon His plans for us.

God is UNCHANGING because He is Faithful to His Word.

If there is ONE truth that a Christian should NEVER doubt - it is that God's word Stands Firm.

Read Psalm 119:89-90, Isaiah 40:8 and Jeremiah 1:12

How does these verses confirm this statement?

We should hold unto and live by His promises. If there is one verse in the Bible that at an early age helped me to take God's word serious enough to begin believing that the Bible was also applicable to me, it was Numbers 23:19.

Read Numbers 23:19

What does it confirm to you about Gods Word and His Promises therein?

Read Hebrews 10:19-20 and 23

What does these verses mean to you personally?

The Bible is GOD's Word. And the God who inspired this written Word is forever faithful. His faithfulness gives us confident hope. Because God is faithful, the hope we rely on — that found in the death and resurrection of Jesus — and all the promises that come with that hope, is sure. No

matter what else may crumble in our lives, that hope remains.

God's faithfulness is the foundation for all He does. All that He has done and will do flows out of His faithfulness. In other words, every act of God is reliable, dependable, consistent, and loyal. He does not stray from who He is, ever.

Therefore we should really be intentional to read God's Word and learn to know His promises and will. And then we must hold unto and live by His promises.

CLOSING REMARKS:

Amid darkness, turmoil, and the storms of this life, we have a beacon to guide us safely to our destination: God's promises to His people. God has given us promises of well-being, strength, and victory — promises that give us direction on how to come out of many difficulties. Those who diligently search God's written Word, the Bible, to seek out and take hold of His promises, will be greatly encouraged.

Corrie ten Boom once said, *"Let God's promises shine on your problems!"* God's promises shine as a light amidst the

darkness and are given to us to help us solve our problems. We all need to 'take hold' of the promises of the LORD God.

But what does it mean to 'take hold' of God's promises? To take hold of God's promises is to seize them as though they belong to us! We must take Father's promises as our own possession, then we will guard them, and value them as our own treasure! If we truly believe in our heart the Truth and Authority of God's written Word, then we will often repeat His wonderful promises — we will proclaim them, speak them out loud, as a way of strengthening our grip on them! (Hebrews 10:23 and Numbers 23:19)

When we learn to apply (trust in and live by) God's promises to our lives, little by little, we will receive more of His divine nature, His character, into our own lives.

PRAYER

Ask God to show you His promises in His Word.

Ask Him to replace your distress and worries with His Word and to give you strength to hold onto His promises and His Word.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Numbers 23:19

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Read Genesis 12:1-9, Genesis 15:13-14 and Genesis 21:1-2, Numbers 23:19 and 2 Peter 1:2-4

Discussion questions

Read Genesis 12:1-9, Genesis 15: 13-14 and Genesis 21:1-2. Have there been occasions when you, like Abram, have waited a very long time to see God fulfill his promise or answer a prayer? What did you learn during those years of waiting? Or are you still waiting? And what can you learn from observing Abram during the twenty-plus years between God's promise (Chapter 12) and its fulfillment? Discuss your different experiences in the group.

Read Numbers 23:19 (memory verse). What does it confirm to You about Gods Word and His Promises therein?

Read 2 Peter 1:2-4 out loud together as a blessing for one another.

Close in prayer



Week 5

Perseverance Builds Character and Generates Hope

Memory Verse:

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God

Romans 5:1b-2

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Romans 5:1-11

OPENING REMARKS:

Trials and tribulations, struggles and hardship, are a fact of living in this fallen world. So how do we handle it when painful stuff happens to us? The Biblical approach makes no sense to us, mere humans. *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds. (James 1:2). When you trace the behaviour of the apostles through the Book of Acts, you discover that they actually practiced this strange response to trials. When the Jewish Sanhedrin flogged the apostles, we read “So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.” (Acts 5:41).*

But you know we struggle to rejoice in times of hardship. A few may be able to say that they rejoice in times of struggles, but for the vast majority of Christians hardship and trials are difficult to handle.

In his letter to the believers in Rome, Paul gives them and us hope in chapter 5. When we are at peace with God, we

stand in His grace, and that must and will give us hope. Hardship will teach us endurance, and that builds character, and that brings hope. And our hope will not disappoint, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Romans 5:1-2

Make a list of all the benefits that justification holds for us.

The peace of God is to be calm and contented amidst trouble and hardship. It happens, whether you feel happy or not, because Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

We have access to God's grace. Access to God's grace means that we are in a favourable position. We can continually go to God with our requests and struggles and hardship, and He will listen.

But there is also hope in God. It is a certain anticipation that we share in God's glory. The more we experience

God's peace and His grace, the more excited we become with the prospect of sharing God's glory in heaven.

Read Romans 5:3-5

How does Paul answer the question: "what good are these benefits if we are still going to suffer?"

God hates the pain and problems of this life. He wanted peace and tranquillity in paradise. We as God's children rejoice over suffering and hardship because we know it will have beneficial consequences. Struggles and hardship and problems teach us endurance and appreciation for what we have. Therefore, we should focus on what we have, rather than on what we don't have.

How do trials and tribulations, struggles and hardship form a believer's character?

Suffering leads to perseverance, it allows us to focus on what really matters. It makes us remember what is truly lasting, it helps us reorientate priorities. And that builds

character. Character develops through experience. It develops despite pain and struggles by being true to your faith in God. Without suffering, character cannot develop. The more your character develops, the more the hope on God's peace and love will grow. The easier it will come to trust God.

Many Christians testify that they feel more about God's presence and love during suffering because it focuses them more and trusts in Him. The fruits of the Spirit and of our redemption will be magnified by suffering. If we face suffering with a clear understanding of who we are in Christ, redeemed by grace alone, our joy will deepen in God's grace. Suffering with your focus on God, will make you and not break you.

Read Romans 5:5-8

By what two ways can we know that God loves us?

Every Christian has an inner experience of the love of God. We can know that God loves us because of the promise of his love. Right through the Bible the love of God is evident. God's love in us comes through the Holy Spirit. The

greater your inner experience of the love of God is, the greater certainty and hope and power you have in times of trials and tribulation.

We can know that God loved us because of the death of Jesus. It took a loving Person to die for wicked, evil, sinful people.

CLOSING REMARKS:

Trials and tribulations are not to harm us. Rather, God uses them to shape us into the image of Christ. He uses them to strengthen our hope of heaven. In Romans 8:28 Paul writes: *“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* Trials are a part of the “all things” that He works “together for good to those who love God.” God uses it to strengthen our faith, to build our character, and this gives us hope.

PRAYER

Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God in every circumstance you encounter this week.

Ask God to help you to grow in endurance, character, and hope through God’s love that has been poured into your heart through the Holy Spirit.

Acknowledging your weaknesses and sinfulness and ask God to help you to know that Christ loves you and died for you while you were still his enemies.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God

Romans 5:1b-2

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Romans 5:1-11

Discussion questions

Read Romans 5:3-5. Why does Paul say we should rejoice in our suffering, not because of them? How can we rejoice in suffering?

How does Paul tell us can suffering change us (refer to verses 3-5)?

Read Romans 5:5-8. How can you really know that this hope of glory is right? How can you know that you do not just want it to be true?

Read Romans 5:8-10. How secure is the future for us as Christians, and why?

Close in prayer



Week 6

There is hope for the hopeless

Memory Verse:

For in this hope we were saved... if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Romans 8:24a, 25

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Psalm 42 and Luke 19:1-10

OPENING REMARKS:

The times we live in are so troubled. People losing their jobs, natural catastrophes, a pandemic, and uncertainty in what the future holds. It seems as if there is little hope for the future, however God is never caught off guard or by surprise. God knows the future. You are not the only one that has felt that there is no hope. Even Bible heroes had their times when they wanted to give up, people like Job, Moses, Jonah, Jeremiah, even the powerful prophet in the Old Testament, Elijah.

The world has definitions of hope that are different from God's. We might hope our team wins the soccer game, or we might hope we don't lose our jobs or our house. But the biblical definition of hope is not a "hope-so", but a "know-so". Our hope in God is surer than the sun rising in the morning.

If you are a believer, you have redemptive hope - you can rest assured that God's love is unfailing, and He will deliver us in the days of calamity. He has rescued the born-again

believers from certain judgment and promised us an eternal home with Him. Instead of using ink, God has signed this redemption with Jesus' own blood which seals you permanently. When our hope is in the Lord and not in us, it is a rock-solid hope.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

The Bible has a lot of verses that teaches us about hope. Read the following verses from the Psalms and write in your own words what it means with regards to putting your hope in God:

Psalm 25:5	
Psalm 31:24	
Psalm 33:20	
Psalm 130:7	
Psalm 131:3	

As believers, we have real hope for the hopeless. There is nothing on this earth more certain than hope in God. He

will never leave us, nor will He ever forsake us. He is our anchor in the present and for the future.

Do you have real hope if you are not a believer?

If you are not a believer, then your only hope is in this world and then we are consumed with worries because we don't know what comes next.

Read Psalm 119:74, 81, Psalm 130:5 and Romans 15:4

Where can people learn about this hope in God?

In God's Word is real hope. When a person reads the Word of God (Bible) they can know for certain that they have a secure and certain future for God will never allow us to suffer beyond our own capabilities to handle it.

Read Psalm 42:1-4

What does the psalmist desire? What word pictures show the depth of his desire?

What does the psalmist's suffering cause him to do? How can memories be both helpful and unhelpful?

Read Psalm 42:5 and 11

What does the Psalmist do to help himself cope with his distress?

When we hope, God hasn't showed up yet, but we are poised and waiting for when He will. Hope, in essence, is waiting for God to act, confident He will. Hope focuses on all that is true about God – his character and his actions. Hope says, *"You are my God no matter how long I have to wait, because I know You will come through."* Hope leads us away from despair and becomes our comfort in hard times.

Read Psalm 42:6-7

What does the psalmist decide to do? How do you think this will help his downcast soul?

Picture a time you have been close to a large waterfall, swift rapids or crashing waves. How does the strength and energy of these waters relate to how the psalmist is feeling?

Read Psalm 42:8

How would the actions of both God and the psalmist, as described in Psalm 42:8, encourage hope during a difficult situation?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-8

Peter begins by praising God for our redemption. In your own words, describe the blessing(s) that have come to those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ.

What significance does verse 6 have for believers, in terms of the trials and tribulations that they face?

Some people believe it is God's responsibility to prevent bad things from happening and then they are disappointed when they do suffer trials. Faith (believing in God) does not provide an insurance policy against suffering, but it gives us hope that we do not have to go through it alone.

Read Romans 8:23-25

What do these verses teach us about hope and perseverance?

Read Hebrews 10:23

What is the guarantee of our faith?

Our hope is strengthened because God, the source of all hope (refer to Romans 15:13), remains faithful to his promises. And His Spirit keeps reminding us of it and helping us to hold on to it more and more.

Read Luke 19:1-10

What does this meeting between Zacchaeus and Jesus teach us about hope for sinners?

Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus reaffirms His mission to save sinners. Not only is Jesus able to save, but He is also merciful and powerful. He reaches out to people, welcomes sinners, and spend time with them, in order to save them.

CLOSING REMARKS:

We all get discouraged and disheartened at various times for various reasons. These are uncomfortable times when we may feel that God is distant or even absent. Discouragement often feels like an unquenched thirst, but the thirst serves a purpose. It drives us, like the panting deer, to the heart of God.

People cannot survive long without hope. Hope keeps us going through painful experiences and fear of what the future may hold. In a fallen world where people face poverty, disease, hunger, injustice, disaster, war, and terrorism, we need a living hope.

Living hope is anchored in the past, Jesus rose from the dead (Matthew 28:6). It continues in the present, Jesus is alive (Colossians 3:1). And it endures throughout the future, Jesus promises eternal, resurrection life (John 3:16, 4:14, 5:24 and Romans 6:22). Living hope enables us to live without despair as we encounter suffering and trials in this present life.

God is our only hope and the only one who can bring comfort and hope to thirsty and longing souls.

PRAYER

Ask God to help you to place your hope in Him.

Ask God to help you to not be discouraged, but to stay strong in the Living Hope, because you know Him through His Word.

Ask Him to help you to remember all the ways in which He has helped and guided you.

Ask God to help you to share His hope with others.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

For in this hope we were saved... if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Romans 8:24a, 25

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Psalm 42, Romans 8:23-25 and Luke 19:1-10

Discussion questions

Read Psalm 42:1-4. What does the psalmist's suffering cause him to do? How can memories be both helpful and unhelpful in times of trials?

Read Psalm 42:5-8, 11. How would the actions of both God and the psalmist encourage you to hope during a difficult time?

Read Romans 8:23-25. What do these verses teach us about hope and perseverance?

Read Luke 19:1-10? What does this meeting between Zacchaeus and Jesus teach us about hope for sinners? How can we share this hope with others?

Close in prayer



Week 7

Living In/Out Peace

Memory Verse:

*And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4:7

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Acts 16:16-25 and Philippians 4:4-9

OPENING REMARKS:

This week our topic is Living In/Out Peace, to be read out as 'Living In Peace and Living Out Peace'. This is inspired by the biblical concept of spiritual peace and the practical life of Christ in which He exhibited the traits of a man of peace, or, as He was known, 'The Prince of Peace'.

The 'in' part of the title refers to Jesus' inner life of peace, and that which He modelled to his disciples through his clear intimacy with God the Father, prayer, and the general demeanour of his life.

The 'out' part of the title refers also to Jesus, but more to the effect Christ had on the people He encountered – before and after his death. After His resurrection He greeted people with "peace be with you (Shalom)" (refer to John. 20:19-23) in order to calm them after seeing His risen form, but also as a reminder of the message of peace that He had brought into the world. As the church continued Christ's work, this message continued to spread and the Peace of Christ was something which

characterised the early church, as they lived their lives ‘at peace’ with those around them and within their inner life with God.

Despite the tensions inside the church and persecution from outside, the power of peace (as a fruit of the Spirit, according to Galatians 5:22) continued to affect people’s lives as they came to know Christ and what their salvation from sin meant for their lives. Peace was not only the demeanour that Christians lived with, but the way they interacted and communicated with the world around them, the way through which God worked amidst unrest, war, and tragedy to bring people back to Him.

Thus, in times of unrest and upheaval in our own lives and the lives of those around us, we can trust in God’s Peace, “*which transcends all understanding*” and that it “*will guard [our] hearts and [our] minds in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:9).

STUDY QUESTIONS:

What is your definition of ‘peace’?

What is the difference between human/worldly peace and the Peace of God?

God's peace is not like the peace of the world. The world's peace is based on the world's thinking, which is the thinking of Satan. The world's peace is circumstantial and depends on comparisons. The world's peace is fleeting. Here one moment, gone the next. One of Satan's tricks towards man is to whisper foreboding forecasts and to lie about the meaning of the present situation to get you to forget the truth that you know and believe. God's peace, when it comes, overshadows, and drives away the anxiety of the world.

Read Acts 16:16-25

How did Paul and Silas handle their suffering?

Paul and other early Christians showed the ability to rejoice in times of trial and suffering.

Read Philippians 4:4-9

Paul suggests in Philippians 4:4 that we should always be rejoicing in the Lord. What does this rejoicing look like practically, and what can we learn from the early Christians radical acts of courageous joy in the face of opposition?

In verse 6 Paul uses 4 words to describe our relational communication with God:

- **Prayer:** the common word to describe our communication with God
- **Petition/Supplication:** a prayer that puts emphasis on need i.e., an immediate situation that you need God to intervene in.
- **Thanksgiving:** a word which is the basis for the term 'eucharist' (The Lord's Supper, Communion) and recalls the things that God has done for us and others, so as not to be without perspective and to be more aware of what God is doing around us.
- **Requests:** prayers with specific petitions, i.e., they may not be immediate needs, but they are nevertheless very specific requests or questions for which you need God's help.

Why is it important that each of these elements are a part of our personal prayer life? Which one are you most likely to 'forget' to focus on in your prayers?

Paul makes it clear that living a life of peace and gentleness that is 'evident to all' starts by rejoicing in the Lord constantly and presenting your prayers, petitions and requests to God with a thankful heart (verse 6). How do these two things practically work together to give you peace?

What does it mean that God's peace *transcends all understanding* (verse 7)?

That means that no matter our circumstances, whether we are facing death, torture, arrest, or ridicule, we will be able

to handle it. Our faith in God dismisses fear and conquers the evil one, leaving us content in whatever life brings.

Sometimes God will reveal why you should have peace in your situation, but not always. God loves it when we trust in Him and our hearts are settled on His grace, goodness, willingness, and ability to save us and help us. Like a child with his good father, we need only to be with Him to be secure. This peace may look ludicrous to the watching world because it they cannot understand it. This peace only comes from a relationship with the Living God.

Why is it important that the peace of God guard our hearts and our minds?

A heart or mind that is unguarded will wallow in fear and anxiety, because we attempt to carry the burden of the Lord. Theologians and philosophers struggle to know where the mind ends and the heart begins, but they will both be at peace when one trusts in God and casts his or her cares on Him. Being in Christ in practice for the believer is to have a mind that is set on Christ. It is to be

present with God in the moment, not busy doubting and fearing, but praying and obeying.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

What assurance does these verses give you? What task is also included for believers?

God's comfort is consoling, strengthening, refreshing and never-failing. Therefore, we can have peace and give comfort to other people that are struggling.

CLOSING REMARKS:

The original Greek word used here for peace, ***eiréné***, is defined by Strong's Concordance as "*one, peace, quietness, or rest*"—it's a giving over, a blissfully relaxing, much like the carefree sleep of a child who has no worries because all their concerns are handled. The notion of God's peace being able to guard and protect us can be a welcome balm for our troubled souls.

In essence, Paul says, don't worry about a thing. Ask God for what you need, be grateful, and joyful in your faith, and your heart and mind will be wrapped tenderly in the protective peace of the Lord.

The key here is that this peace comes because of an action: Prayer. When we petition God — go to Him with our requests, worries, cares, and concerns — we get a bonus gift: Not only does He hear us, but He gives us a peaceful, easy feeling in return because we've dealt with the problem correctly by giving it over to the only One who can do anything about it.

That means that no matter our circumstances, whether we are facing death, torture, arrest, or ridicule, we'll be able to handle it in stride. Our faith in God dispels fear and conquers the evil one, leaving us content in whatever life brings.

Paul is saying God will work it all out. He will handle our problems and our terrors if we only believe and turn them over to Him. In return, we receive a supernatural peace, unexplainable, and perhaps not even comprehensible, with the potential to calm us and enable us to experience joy.

PRAYER

Thank God that He is near you in all your struggles.

Ask Him to help you to resist becoming anxious in difficult times.

Ask Him to guide you to appropriate scriptures in His Word.

Ask Him to help you find uplifting activities that would calm your heart.

Ask Him to identify whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable and everything that is excellent or praiseworthy to think about.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:7

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Philippians 4:4-9

Discussion questions

Read Acts 16:16-25 and Philippians 4:4. How does the joy of Paul and other early Christians look like? What can we learn from them amid opposition or hardship?

Read Philippians 4:6. What practical elements of prayer will bring you divine peace. How can this peace be evident to others?

Read Philippians 4:6-9. What do you find most difficult to trust God with? Is there a part of your life that you still don't trust God completely with? Discuss in the group.

Let us come to God in reverent, humble, specific, and grateful prayer. Pray for each other. Ask God to help you trust God more and thus experience more of his peace? Pray now for those in your life who will be affected by your peace with God.

Close in prayer



Week 8

God's love endures forever

Memory Verse:

Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever.

Psalm 136:26

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Romans 8:22-39, 1 John 4:7-21 and 1 Corinthians 13: 8-13

OPENING REMARKS:

We face so many terrible things almost every day, we can't pretend they are not happening to us. Sometimes, we are hit by diseases and the constant degradation of the world's economy. We are also subjected to the world's hatred of the Bible and Christianity. These things that we are facing in this world are inevitable, they will always happen. God did not design them to be like that but when sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, all these evils crept in. We will constantly live with them and that is why Jesus said in John 17:15-16: *"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."* We might be living in the world, but we are not of the world and the Lord will always keep us from the evils in this world - because he has *"overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

The challenges a Christian face in his daily activities and how the Lord helps him overcome them, is what forms the

basis of hope for him. As well as enables him to grow more spiritually. The time of trouble is not the time to move away from God but the time to be grateful for the salvation and the love He has shown us. If not for his love, we won't be saved through Jesus Christ. His love will always be there for us. This love will comfort you in any situation, it gives you hope. Don't move out of his love because of the situation you are in right now. Psalm 136:26 says: *"Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever."*

Thanking Him is what we should do instead of complaining, we need to thank Him for the love He has for us.

Many in the Bible have faced such things before, but they choose to stand in the love of God. What we need to do is to find the love of God in the face of God.

No matter what situation you are in, God in his mercy and unfailing love will help you out it. We should not even worry about anything because the love of God is sure - God is love. God demonstrated this love because, while we were sinners, while we were facing troubles that comes with sin, Christ chose to die for us. This is the greatest love that has ever been recorded.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Psalm 119:76 and Lamentations 3:22-23

What is promised about God's love?

The Bible assures us on multiple occasions of God's love for His children. Here we are promised comfort and that God's love is never-ending. It is very significant how several of the Bible translations translates it as "steadfast" love.

What does "steadfast love" mean to you? Describe it in your own words.

Read Romans 8:18-25

Paul's message to the Roman Christians is to re-assure them of the hope there is through God's love in Christ.

Write down everything he describes about the Christian's struggles and creation's struggles, due to its decay.

Read Romans 8:26-39

What is the source of our hope, comfort and assistance?
(Refer to verse 35 and 39)

Who helps us in our weakness and how does He do it?
(Refer to verses 26-27)

What are Christians protected *against* and protected *from*
by the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord? (Refer
to verses 35, 38-39)

We have previously learnt that God never changes and
always keeps His promises. Write down and memorize the

following promises God gives each of us who experience trials and tribulations in this world and in our life's, through him who loved us:

Romans 8:28	
Romans 8:31	
Romans 8:37	
Romans 8:38-39	

What is the ultimate proof that God can and will hold His promise (Refer to verse 32)?

Read 1 John 4:7-21

In St. Paul's Cathedral in London, is a life-size, marble statue of Christ struggling in anguish on the cross. The statue is subscribed: *"This is how God loved the world!"*

In his Gospel and his Epistles, John - the "apostle of love" - points out a very important truth: since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (1 John 4:11).

Read 1 John 4:7-21 attentively, and answer the following questions:

Complete the sentence:

Because love from (vs 7),
therefore God IS (vs 8)!

What is love according to verse 10?

What is the result if Christians love one another (refer to verse 12)?

What is the implication if a Christians *lives in love* (refer to verse 16b)?

What is God's command? (Refer to verse 19 and 21 and memorize these verses)

The biggest mistake you could make about God's love is to think about it in terms of timespan. His love endures

forever means that it has no expiry date! That is what stands out from Paul's chapter of love - 1 Corinthians 13.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Fill in the missing word:

God's love never

What does this mean? In verses 8-10 he describes that love will not stop when Jesus returns. Knowledge in this age is only partial, and prophecy, the proclamation of God's will, is also only partial (13:9). With Jesus' return, the need for these gifts will subside (13:10).

Explain 1 Corinthians 13:13 it in your own words

ONLY love will remain - because it is the greatest! The Christian faith is built on faith, hope and love. Of these three, love, however, is the only one that passes to the time that begins with Jesus' return. It is called the greatest, because it will always be there, while faith and hope will be fulfilled when Jesus returns to reign and will cease!

The following illustration explains it: Parents who raise children teach them to speak because they believe (have faith that) their children have this ability. Because they hope that one day their children will speak well, they persevere in the teaching process. They do it because they love their children. When these children reach these ideals, faith and hope fail — but love remains.

CLOSING REMARKS:

All around us we see love fail. We see relationships end in breakups. We see marriages end in divorce. We see friendships end. We let people down and miss opportunities to love well. We think we love, but we doubt our love when our feelings go away and the relationship has challenges.

God's love is nothing like those "loves." His love never fails - it endures forever. Some people love us based on our performance. God's love is not based on what we do or don't do. Our choices bring consequences, and they must be faced, but they won't change God's love for us. God pursues us no matter how much we reject him. His love for us is unconditional and permanent. *"You, Lord, are a*

compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Psalm 86:15).

Jesus’ death and resurrection are the grandest acts of love anyone will ever do for you. Jesus left his throne in heaven to come to earth as a humble person who was beaten and killed, a Saviour who offered himself on a cross as your sacrifice. Clearly Jesus’ love for you is not empty, mushy, or wimpy. It is strong and unfailing. His death and resurrection took away your sin and gives you true life with Him. He can back up his promises to care for you and meet your needs.

PRAYER

Today’s prayer comes from Psalm 136:1 and Zephaniah 3:17:

Lord, your love endures forever. Thank you for being the Mighty Warrior who saves us and delights in us. Teach me to rejoice because in your love you rejoice over us! Your love never fails. Help me accept your love and share it with others. In Jesus’ name, amen.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever.

Psalm 136:26

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Read Psalm 27 and Romans 8:18-39

Discussion questions

Read Psalm 27:1, 5-6, 10, 13-14 about David's approach to hardships. Discuss as a group:

What have you learnt about God's unfailing, steadfast love?

Does it give you the same courage as David, to be resilient in difficult times? If not, what must change for you to have the same courage and resilience in difficult times?

Read Romans 8:18-39. Talk about the following questions.

- Have you been looking elsewhere for peace in this world and not God?
- Have you been relying on God's love to overcome the challenges you have been facing?
- Are you getting the true comfort you want?

- Are you utilizing the love of God for your life?

Close in prayer



Further study on God's everlasting love

PERSONAL STUDY

OPENING REMARKS:

We can never learn too much about God's enduring love.

The following study is about different Psalms that talk about God's love that is steadfast and enduring.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Psalm 90

Psalm 90 is a Prayer of Moses. He speaks of God's "Unfailing" Love! (Refer to Psalm 6:4). Spend ample time with this prayer to learn what God does for His child by this love.

How bad was Moses' situation (Psalm 90:7-10)?

In what ways does God's unfailing love help the believer (refer to Psalm 90:13b-17)?

Read Psalm 86

This is a prayer of David. He describes what he is experiencing to the Lord and pleads for God's mercy in his days of trouble.

What is David's motivation to call upon the Lord (refer to verse 13)?

David had complete trust that God would respond to his need because of His unfailing love. Therefore he asked God to hear and answer his cry for help. David also knew God could respond to his needs. *"Among the gods there is none like You... For You are great and do marvellous deeds"* (Psalm 86:8, 10).

How bad was David's situation (refer to verse 1, 13-14)?

David's troubles weren't easy, light, or few. He even knew days when "a band of ruthless men" sought his life (Psalm 86:14). At various times in his life, David needed protection, mercy, joy, forgiveness, provision, strength, comfort, and guidance. God met every need, every time.

Read Psalm 27

How bad was David's situation according to verses 2-3 and verse 10?

What do you need today? God will respond to your call because He is full of unfailing love for you. God can meet your need because He possesses all power and authority.

We live in a cruel world. And because of the Fall, creation is in decay. Life is not only hard because of the effect of the Fall on creation, but also because of the world's hatred of Christ and His followers because of sin ruling the world. It is very important that you should believe that God does not only want to protect us against physical adversaries by His unfailing, steadfast love, but also against the inner turmoil and conflict of our spiritual struggles. He warned and promised His disciples: *"In this world you will have*

trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33).

CLOSING REMARKS:

God is love. His love for us changes who we are and how we relate to other people. His love is unfailingly patient, kind, protecting, merciful, and hopeful. His love seeps into us, and then it pours back out of us onto the people around us. His love gives us strength to do things that seem impossible.

PRAYER:

Thank God for His unfailing love.

Allow yourself to be changed by His love.

Ask Him to fill you with His love and to enable you to pour His love for you back into the lives of others.

MEMORY VERSES

WEEK 1:

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

Hebrews 4:15

WEEK 2:

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:7

WEEK 3:

... yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

Habakkuk 3:18

WEEK 4:

God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Numbers 23:19

WEEK 5:

We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have gained access by faith into this
grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope
of the glory of God

Romans 5:1b-2

WEEK 6:

For in this hope we were saved... if we hope for what we
do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Romans 8:24a, 25

WEEK 7:

And the peace of God, which transcends all
understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds
in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:7

WEEK 8:

Give thanks to the God of heaven.

His love endures forever.

Psalms 136:26

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SEVERAL RESOURCES FROM LOGOS:

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- Holman Quicksources Guide to Understanding the Bible International Standard Bible Encyclopedis
- Opening up Genesis
- Strong Faith in a Faithful God - Spurgeon 1915
- The Christians Secret of Holy Life
- Die Bybellenium Eenvolume Kommentaar
- A 40 Day Guide to Life in Christ
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- The Wycliff Bible Encyclopedia



2021