

Cultivating Faith in Challenging Times – August 10 & 11, 2019

Follow-up Bible Studies

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Day One: Exodus 15:1-21

- Who sang to the Lord (1)? Why (1)? Describe God's strength and how it measures up to the Egyptian army (2-7). Summarize the singers' focus on the parting of the Red Sea (8-10). Which line thus far most captures your attention? Why?
- What general truths come next in this song (11-12, 18)? What memories do you have of God's holiness, majesty and glory? What about those times he stretched out his hand to work wonders? How does looking back in this way impact your faith?
- What do the singers look forward to (13-17)? What sense do you have of God guiding you to his holy dwelling? How does this hope of heaven help you to live through the challenges of today?
- Describe the shift from Moses leading the Israelites' in song to Miriam doing so (19-21). Today we still gather to proclaim in song what God *has* done, *is* doing and *will* do. This nourishes our souls. What are some other ways to cultivate faith together?

Day Two: Isaiah 61

- Why does Isaiah sense the Holy Spirit is upon him (1-3)? Do you also sense you are anointed to do any of these things? Which ones? Pray for more opportunities to participate in these Kingdom breakthroughs. Then meditate on the phrase "the oil of joy instead of mourning." Pray God would bestow this on you in times of hardship, and that it would inspire others to draw nearer to Jesus.
- Describe the future awaiting the grief-stricken (3-7). Despite life's challenges, what tastes do you have of this future? What makes it possible to await the complete fulfillment of this prophecy?
- Why is God faithful to do all these things (8-9)? How does his everlasting covenant impact your life now? What picture of joy – something sustained by God alone – does the prophet then paint (10-11)? Write your own vivid scene of Holy Spirit-given joy. Read it aloud. How do you feel?

Day Three: Luke 4:14-30

- Set the scene of this passage (14-15). What would it be like for you to return to your hometown, full of the Holy Spirit? How do you think it felt for Jesus? What did he do on the Sabbath (16-17)?
- Summarize the text Jesus read; note that it's an excerpt of yesterday's study (18-19). What happened right after he read it (20)? What did he say to the congregation (21)? At the time of its writing, Isaiah 61 was a picture of hope for things not yet seen. Here, Jesus astonishingly says we can now see it and experience it. In what ways do you feel there is now good news, freedom, recovery and favor to be had? Speak to the Lord about this.
- How did people respond to Jesus' claim (22)? Summarize Jesus' remarks about the reality of ministering to one's own people (23-27). What happened next (28-30)? Jesus' audience quickly went from fastening their eyes on him in awe to plotting to kill him. Why? What does this tell you about their faith?

Day Four: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

- What rhetorical question does Paul pose (24)? How does he call us to run (24)? Spiritually speaking, what does this mean? What does it look like to run to win the prize of Jesus? What habits and disciplines are required? Are they a regular part of your life?
- What do race competitors endure and pursue (25)? How does Paul's assertion here relate to Matthew 6:19-21? Consider the race you're in. Are you running toward Jesus, or something else? Or perhaps nothing at all? Ask the Holy Spirit to speak. What is he revealing? And how do you plan to respond?
- How does Paul rise up to meet this challenge of the need for self-discipline (26-27)? Fixing your eyes on Christ allows you to do something remarkable: you can enslave your flesh; you can throw off sin. Pray for power and discipline to live in this way. What tangible and intangible changes would usher this in?

Day Five: Galatians 5:13-26

- What are believers called to (13)? What should we do with this freedom (13)? What most perfectly fulfills God's law (14)? What are the risks of not loving your neighbor as yourself (15)? Imagine using your freedom only as Paul commands. What would this cultivate in your life and in the lives of others?
- What happens when we "walk by the Spirit" (16-18)? Paul claims "the acts of the flesh are obvious;" what are they (19-21)? What warning does he issue about them (21)? What are some ways you succeed in throwing off these sins? What is still a struggle for you? Repent and fix your eyes on Christ. As he returns your gaze, what is he communicating to you?
- Describe the fruit of the Spirit (22-23). Focus on faithfulness and self-control. What do you need from the Holy Spirit in order to exhibit more of these qualities? In Christ, what is our sin's fate (24)? What else does Paul say about "life by the Spirit" (25-26)?