

## ***What Does it Mean to Have Christian Faith? — October 15 & 16, 2016***

### **Follow-up Bible Studies**

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#### **Day One: Joshua 1**

- To whom is God speaking (1)? On what occasion (1)? Where did the Lord tell the people to go (2-4)? What reassurances did God offer (3, 5-6)? What did the Lord tell Joshua to be careful to do (7-9)? What promises did God then reiterate (8-9)?
- Read Genesis 15:1. How do God's words there relate to these in Joshua? In scripture, such words often precede the Lord's command to believe in or to do the seemingly impossible. Pray these words would embolden your own faith. This week, what is one way to demonstrate strength and courage in the face of fear?
- How did Joshua spread the word about the plan to depart for the Promised Land (10-11)? What special message did Joshua have for some of the tribes (13-15)? Summarize their response (16-18). What command of the Lord did they echo to Joshua (18)? Who in your life could use a reminder to be strong and courageous? Ask the Lord to give you the right words and the right time to issue it.

#### **Day Two: Psalm 46**

- How does God act as our protector (1, 7, 11)? What does this enable us to do (2)? Despite what hardships (2-3)? What do you think these descriptions of natural disasters could symbolize? Do they remind you of anything going on in your own life? If so, what? Cry out to the Lord now, using the words from this very psalm: ask him to be your refuge, strength, ever-present help, etc. What response do you sense him speaking?
- Describe the Lord's dwelling place (4-5). How is the city of God protected (5)? Contrast earthly kingdoms with the Lord's dominion and power (6). What about global conflict; what role does God play in war (8-10)? These final verses reveal some of the false refuges we often seek out: politicians, weapons, victory in war, etc. Ask the Lord to search your heart for your own false refuges. What is he revealing? What is he asking you to do about this?

#### **Day Three: Isaiah 53:4-12**

- In this messianic prophecy, what did he take upon himself (4, 12)? Who is *he*? Genesis 15:6 states, "Abram *believed* the Lord." Do you believe these words here in Isaiah are about Jesus Christ? Why or why not? If so, give thanks to God that the hand of faith makes it possible for you to lay hold of trust in his word.
- How did we consider Jesus in his suffering (4)? Describe his punishment (5, 8). For what crimes (5-6, 8-9)? What did this punishment bring to us (5)? In what way are we like sheep (6)? While suffering, how did he behave (7)? How did people respond to his oppression (8)? In death, what community did he join (9)?
- Describe the way all of this was God's will (10). What is the surprising twist in this story (10-11)? What will be Jesus' reward (12)? Upon reading these words, how do you feel about God? Jesus? The Bible? What roles do messianic prophecies like this play in your faith?

#### **Day Four: Galatians 3:1-14**

- How does Paul address the Galatians, and what accusation does he level against them (1)? Of what truth does he remind them (1)? Describe the way he probes them regarding the role of the Holy Spirit versus the role of "the works of the law" in their faith (2-5).
- Imagine Paul addressing you in verse three. Ask the Holy Spirit to gently reveal any failures to fully receive God's grace. How do you try to justify yourself with works instead

of Jesus' persevering grace? How do you think the Lord feels about this? How do you feel led to respond? Pray that your faith would be grounded in belief in and receipt of God's grace.

- What does the example of Abraham teach about how to achieve righteousness (6)? In this regard, describe what it means to be Abraham's descendent (7-9). How does relying on the works of the law make for a very different faith experience (10-12)? How did Jesus redeem us from the law's curse (13-14)?

#### **Day Five: Ephesians 2:1-10**

- How does Paul describe one's spiritual state and behavior prior to following Christ (1-3, 5)? At that time, what did we deserve (3)? However, what is the great "but" found in Jesus (4-5)? Describe the believer's current status (6). Why does God do this for us (7)? What roles do grace, faith, and works play in one's salvation (8-9)? How do we live as God's handiwork (10)?
- Paul repeats two points: Jesus freed us while we were dead in sin *and* it is by grace we are saved. How are these two points related? Despite these truths, some try to justify themselves before God. Why? Pray that receiving God's grace in humility, instead of trying to earn it, would mark your journey of faith.
- Read Genesis 15:12-21. Abram was in a deep sleep when God made promises to him; we were dead in our sin when Jesus brought us to life. Building upon yesterday's reading in Galatians, how does this additional connection to Abraham make you feel? What do you want to say to God about it?