

New Christian Growth Series

Topical Study:

Discouragement





Instructions:

1. Please fill in the blanks in these lessons and the review booklet, using a King James Version of the Bible.
2. When you are finished, keep this lesson book and **return the completed review booklet** by U.S. mail or e-mail to:

Plowman's Academy

575 US Highway 250

Greenwich, OH 44837

OR

plowman@mapministry.org

3. When we receive your review booklet, we will grade it, send it back to you, and send the next course in this volume.
4. When you have completed all 12 books in this course, we will send you a certificate.

Plowman's Academy was started to provide the opportunity for teens and adults to study God's Word more deeply, imitate Jesus more closely, and be more sensitive and obedient to God's Holy Spirit—all through the means of correspondence (communication by letters or mail) courses. Jesus taught us that when we set out to follow Him, we ought to do so with no regrets, no second thoughts, and no turning back. We welcome you to join us as we aim to turn from sin, surrender to God, seek Him until He rains righteousness upon us, and then follow Him faithfully and fully forever. Let us look always to Jesus and live always for eternity, for Jesus Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Thank you for joining us. An academy is a place of study or training in a specific subject or skill. At Plowman's Academy, the subject is Jesus. Put your hand to the plow and do not look back.



And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

~Luke 9:62

Giving Credit and Appreciation to Ray Witmer

Ray Witmer, author of this Bible study curriculum, has given us permission to use his studies taken from the Word of God.

We are very grateful and appreciate Brother Ray's heart for God and his willingness to let us use his resources to spread God's Word among this generation of people.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

~Hosea 10:12

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INSTRUCTION SHEET FOR BIBLE LESSONS

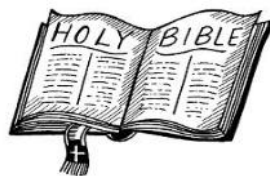
- A. The Bible verses used in this study are taken from the King James Version of the Bible, translated out of the original tongues with the former translation diligently compared and revised.
- B. Before doing each lesson, take time to ask God to open your understanding and show you the truth.
- C. For the best results, do only one lesson each day. Meditate on each day's lesson (there are four weeks of lessons per book).
- D. Keep in mind that these lessons are based on what the Bible says and not on man's opinion.
- E. These lessons are designed to help you to know the truth, to know the Lord in a personal way, and to trust what the Bible says and teaches you.
- F. Remember, it is not what you, I, or any preacher says, but what the Bible says.
- G. You must learn to stand on what the Bible says to "study to show yourself approved unto God, workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)
- H. Who wrote the Bible? (2 Peter 1:21).
- I. All Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16).
- J. Regardless of what man says, the believer (Christian) has direct access to the throne of God and is responsible directly to God. This access is through Jesus Christ and Him only (1 Timothy 2:5).
- K. These studies are to help you have peace of mind (Isaiah 26:3-4).
- L. These studies will help you know if you are going to heaven or hell (Romans 10:13).
- M. These lessons will help you with assurance and security; these are not the same. The securing of the believer is God's work. It is a part of God's great work of salvation depending solely upon His infinite grace. Assurance is the believer's acceptance of the security provided for him in Christ. It is the result of the human soul resting in what God has promised in His Word to accomplish. This is why it is important to know what the Bible says (1 John 5:11-13).



**TAKE TIME TO READ BELOW
BEFORE DOING THIS LESSON**

Meditate on the Scriptures of This Lesson and
Ask Yourself These Questions:

1. What do these verses teach me about God and myself?
2. Is there an example here to follow or avoid?
3. Is there a command, a promise, or a warning that I need to apply?
4. What action do I need to take to align my life with this truth?



The Bible is the Word of God

LESSON 1

GOD DOES NOT DESERT US DURING DISCOURAGING TIMES

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 36:7

How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust
under the shadow of Thy wings.

David felt like God was far away from him; he felt like a young deer seeking water. His tears mocked him, saying, "Where is thy God?" When you are discouraged, you don't see things truthfully. Everything seems worse.

"As the hart [deer] panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my _____ after _____, O God. My soul _____ for God, for the _____ God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" (Psalm 42:1-3).

You must remember that God does not change. If He was near you in happy times, He is near you in hard times, too.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be _____ with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never _____ thee, nor _____ thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my _____, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ _____ yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:5-8).

When you're discouraged, many times you're looking inwardly. Looking inwardly will only bring disappointment; you must hope in what you cannot see—the living God. Faith in Him drives away discouragement.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? _____ thou in _____: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I _____ from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar" (Psalm 42:5-6).

The end of this verse says that you should continue to praise Him in the midst of discouragement. God will not desert you; His face is upon the child of God even when you feel alone. Praise drives away discouragement. Praise looks upward; it can be in the form of singing or thanking God for His character (His mercy, almightiness, justice, etc.), and it is lifting God up for all He has done for you. You can praise Him for big and small things. When he was discouraged, David remembered the victories God had given him in life. He was a shepherd and a king.

Can you think of times the Lord helped you that encourage your heart? Please take time to write them down:

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 42.

LESSON 2

FIGHTING DISCOURAGEMENT (PART I)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 36:7

How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust
under the shadow of Thy wings.

“Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me. Yet the LORD will command His _____ in the day time, and in the night His _____ shall be with me, and my _____ unto the God of my _____” (Psalm 42:7-8).

David felt like he was at the bottom of the ocean, much like Jonah must have felt when he was in the belly of the fish. Even in the fish, though, God remembered Jonah, and even if you feel like you are sinking low, God remembers you. David turned his heart around; he believed that God would show His lovingkindness.

“I will say unto God my _____, Why hast Thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, _____ is thy _____?” (Psalm 42:9-10).

When you are discouraged, you have a choice to make. Do you believe that God loves you and has a plan for you that you can trust, or do you continue to dwell on the apparent hopelessness of your situation? David allowed God's song to be with him; he sang in his heart to the Lord. David prayed to the God of “my life.” This was not a prayer of discouragement, but rather a prayer of hope and trust. Whining to God is not trust; you should pray believing God, and not challenging Him.

“Why art thou _____, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet _____ Him, who is the _____ of my countenance, and my _____” (Psalm 42:11).

Once again, David asks discouraging questions that may seem very familiar to you. Can you answer these questions?

- Why have you forgotten me, God?
- Why am I upset because of my enemies?
- Where is my God?

David's answer must be our answer; it is repeated from verse 5. His answer to discouragement is:

- Hope in God (believe He will deliver you from your troubles). Do you believe?
- Praise Him. Lift up the Lord in faith, even though you can't see Him. Praise Him and believe that He is working in your life and has not forgotten you. Do you believe this?

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 43.

LESSON 3

FIGHTING DISCOURAGEMENT (PART II)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 36:7

How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust
under the shadow of Thy wings.

Psalm 27 is full of truth for the believer who feels forsaken, afraid, or confused about details of life. The Lord wants to be your light—He is the one who wants to guide you through darkness.

“The LORD is my _____ and my _____; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the _____ of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1).

The Lord wants to be your salvation—He is the one who can deliver you from your sinfulness, and then from trouble in your life even if you may not like His method of deliverance. He allows scars for sin and wrong choices, but He does not abandon you. He is the strength of your life. Are you trusting in yourself or in God to be your strength? If you are trusting in yourself, you will certainly fail and fall. If you are trusting in the Lord, as Psalm 27:1 says, you shall fear no one.

“When the _____, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my _____ shall not _____: though war should rise against me, in this will I be _____” (Psalm 27:2-3).

Discouragement can come when you feel that life's problems are too great for you; it indicates that you have lost your courage. Verses 2-3 teach that your courage in life does not come from being tough or prideful; true courage comes from trusting the Lord when enemies come against you. In verse three, the word “host” means an entire army.

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I _____ after; that I may _____ in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the _____ of the LORD, and to enquire in His temple. For in the time of _____ He shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a _____” (Psalm 27:4-5).

In times of trouble, David desired to go to the house of the Lord. He wanted to get close to the Lord and see God's beauty. In times of discouragement, it is important that you are faithful to the Lord and read His Word to try to draw close to Him. You need to see His beauty and not your own troubles. Verse 5 has great promise for those discouraged or in trouble. God will hide you in His pavilion. This means that God will protect you and bring you near to Him. Scripture says that He will set you on a rock. A rock is solid and stable and doesn't move or sink. Jesus is a solid rock that you can stand on in discouraging times.

What does God do to wicked enemies that come against his innocent children?

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 27.

LESSON 4

DISCOURAGEMENT COMES WHEN YOU TAKE YOUR EYES OFF GOD

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 36:7

How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust
under the shadow of Thy wings.

“And now shall mine head be _____ above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of _____; I will sing, yea, I will sing _____ unto the LORD” (Psalm 27:6).

David chose to take his eyes off his discouragement and place them on the Lord. In Psalm 27 he comes to the Lord with joy; he sings to the Lord because he has his eyes set on praising the Lord instead of focusing on his own troubles.

“_____, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have _____ also upon me, and _____ me. When Thou saidst, _____ ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my _____; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my _____” (Psalm 27:7-9).

You can see several truths about God from these verses. They were written during David's discouragement to teach you how to react during your discouragement.

God will be merciful to you and answer you if you ask for His mercy in humbleness. When you feel God tugging at your heart to seek Him, you had better immediately seek His face. God will not hide His face from His child, and He will not put you away in anger. God will not forsake you, because He has saved you.

“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the _____ will take me up. Teach me Thy way, O LORD, and _____ me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Deliver me not over unto the _____ of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty” (Psalm 27:10-12).

People will fail you. Discouragement often comes because people let you down and do not come through for you as you may expect. In the Bible, David says that even when His father and mother forsake him, the Lord will take him up.

If you are discouraged because of others failing you, please know that the Lord understands, and He will never fail you as people on this earth will. Even the hard things He allows to come into your life are for your best and for His glory. Look what God tells you in the following Bible verse:

“And we know that _____ work together for good to them that _____ God, to them who are the called according to _____ purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Today's Bible reading is 2 Corinthians chapter 9.

LESSON 5

THE KEY TO DISCOURAGEMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 36:7

How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust
under the shadow of Thy wings.

Even when you feel like you are at your wits' end, you can be encouraged knowing that the Lord will be good to you in this life. He will have mercy; He will help you through your discouragement.

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the _____ of the LORD in the land of the _____.
_____ on the LORD: be of good _____, and He shall _____ thine _____: wait, I
say, on the _____" (Psalm 27:13-14).

Here are the major keys to fighting discouragement:

- Wait on the Lord; give God time to work.
- Be courageous during dark times; God has not forgotten you.
- Trust in God.
- Depend upon God.

"And God is able to make all _____ abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every _____: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; He hath given to the poor: His _____ remaineth for ever" (2 Corinthians 9:8-9).

God is able to do more than you ask or imagine.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly _____ all that we _____ or
_____, according to the _____ that worketh in us, Unto Him be _____ in the church by
_____ throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Jesus is your hope and an anchor for your soul.

"Which _____ we have as an _____ of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even _____, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews 6:19-20).

The Lord wants you to cast all your cares upon Him because He cares for you.

"_____ yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: Casting _____ your care upon _____; for He careth for _____" (1 Peter 5:6-7).

"Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by _____ and _____ with _____ let your requests be made known unto God. And the _____ of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your _____ and _____ through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Today's Bible reading is Hebrews chapter 6.

LESSON 6

ENCOURAGING A TROUBLED HEART

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 36:7

How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust
under the shadow of Thy wings.

God lays out the road to encouragement:

- Refuse to be full of worry
- Pray
- Thank God

When you truly cast your burdens upon the Lord, He will bring you peace. You've probably experienced one of those days when nothing seemed to go right. In fact, you may have gone through a season of weeks, months, or even years when nothing seemed to turn out as planned. No matter how strong you are, you will experience discouragement. During those times, you may feel alone; that's when you realize how weak you are.

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of _____, and the God of all _____; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that _____ may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Many people in the world want to say that Christianity—and even God Himself—is a crutch for the weak. However, it is in your weakness that you discover God's strength and the incredible encouragement He offers.

“And He said unto me, My _____ is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in _____. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of _____ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am _____, then am I _____” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

God never says, “You're going to be defeated.” Instead, the Bible reminds you that you are a conqueror through Christ.

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that _____ us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to _____ us from the _____ of God, which is in _____ our Lord” (Romans 8:37-39).

When things go wrong in your life, you need to turn to God and ask Him for help. Relief may not be immediate or even quick according to our standards, but God is ready to lead the charge to help you come through those difficult times in your life with rock-solid faith in Him. Recognizing your weakness allows you to depend on the source of true strength.

What steps will you take to encourage yourself?

Today's Bible reading is 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

LESSON 7

HANDLING OUR DISCOURAGEMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 14:16

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

At some point, each of us will experience feelings of discouragement. A sudden change can leave us feeling unsure about the future. However, there is never a time when God is unsure. He is in control even when your life becomes fractured by the pressures of the world.

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall _____, or what ye shall _____; nor yet for your body, what ye shall _____. Is not the life more than _____, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father _____ them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matthew 6:25-26).

The Bible clearly tells you what you are to do when worries and concerns arise: “Do not be worried about your life...” Also, the Bible says that you are to cast all your cares (discouragement) on Him, because He cares for you.

“Humble yourselves therefore under the _____ hand of _____, that He may exalt you in due time: Casting _____ your _____ upon Him; for He careth for _____” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Discouragement comes when you feel that your circumstances are beyond your control, but nothing is beyond God's control. When discouragement approaches, do you wonder what happened to your peace? Jesus Christ is your source of true peace. When sorrows come, He calms your heart. When financial difficulties increase, He provides for each need.

“Be sober, be _____; because your adversary the _____, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the _____, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

The Bible says, “Cease striving and know that I am God...”(Psalm 46:10, NASB1995). Be still within your heart, and allow Him to do for you what you cannot do yourself: calm your fears. God cares for you. His love is unconditional, and His Word promises that He will meet all your needs.

“Be _____, and _____ that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be _____ in the _____. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our _____. Selah” (Psalm 46:10-11).

“But my God shall supply all your _____ according to His _____ in _____ by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our _____ be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Philippians 4:19-20).

Name one thing from this lesson that you can use to fight discouragement:

Today's Bible reading is Hebrews chapter 12.

LESSON 8

ARE THE STORMS OF LIFE GOD'S PURPOSE?

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 14:16

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

God is a God of purpose, which means that even the storms of life have a purpose. So what does God have in mind for the discouragement you encounter?

“Before I was afflicted I went _____: but now have I kept _____. Thou art good, and doest good; _____ me Thy statutes. The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep Thy precepts with my _____” (Psalm 119:67-69).

Through your difficulties and hardships, discouragement, ungodly attitudes, and habits will surface. Some of these feelings will surprise you, while others will be sins that you are struggling to eliminate or that you are ignoring.

King David experienced this truth when the prophet Nathan confronted him about his sin. Take time to read about this in 2 Samuel 12:1-15, and list sins that you have been ignoring in your own life:

Now, list the way you plan to get rid of these sins in your life:

“Their heart is as fat as grease; but I _____ in Thy _____. It is _____ for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy _____. The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of _____ and _____” Psalm 119:70-72).

If you were to ask the Lord, “What do You want from me most of all?” He would reply, “I want an intimate relationship with you. I want you to experience My love, and I want to experience your love in return. I want you to surrender yourself to Me, so that we can walk closely together all your life. I want to reveal Myself to you as God.”

“Thy hands have _____ and fashioned me: give me _____, that I may learn Thy commandments. They that fear Thee will be _____ when they see me; because I have hoped in _____” (Psalm 119:73-74).

You would probably prefer to learn the lessons of the Christian life through pleasant times, wouldn't you? But God, who knows you well, permits just what you need, so you might walk in purity at His side. Look to your Heavenly Father and trust His purpose.

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 119.

LESSON 9

THE STORMS OF DISCOURAGEMENT: GOD'S PROVISION

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 14:16

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

At some point in your life, you will hit great turbulence. You may have already experienced some and can see that more is to come. Your situation may even be so serious that you think to yourself, "How am I going to make it through this?"

"And straightway _____ constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to _____: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was _____" (Matthew 14:22-24).

Consider the time the disciples found themselves alone in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. The Bible says that the boat was being battered by waves, and the wind was against them.

"And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, _____ on the _____. And when the _____ saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for _____" (Matthew 14:25-26).

In the midst of the storm, the disciples thought they saw a ghost walking toward them. These grown men, some of whom were seasoned fisherman, cried out in fear. They remained afraid until they realized that it was Jesus walking toward them. What happened when the men recognized Jesus?

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not _____. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, _____. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to _____" (Matthew 14:27-29).

The disciples received a sense of comfort. "Oh, it's Jesus. We aren't helpless and alone anymore. He is here." They received courage to face their trial. Peter even had enough courage to obey Jesus and step out of the boat in the midst of the storm. The men also received confidence for their future because they realized that Jesus' presence could not be driven away by the severe winds. The same is true today.

"But when he saw the _____ boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little _____, wherefore didst thou _____? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased" (Matthew 14:30-32).

What waves and winds are battering you in life? Are you afraid? Ask the Lord to reveal His presence in your situation and then fill your senses with that awareness. Close your eyes and picture Him at your side, holding you tightly. Let your ears hear Him whisper reassurance and love. Fill your mind with the knowledge of His promises, and draw upon the strength, comfort, and courage He offers.

Today's Bible reading is Matthew chapter 14.

LESSON 10

CONFIDENCE TO FACE DISCOURAGEMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 14:16

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

Do you love the trials, difficulties, and discouragements that fill your life? Of course not! Nobody likes to go through hard times, yet you know without a doubt that these hardships will come and go throughout your entire life no matter how much you may try to avoid them. The question is, how can you face these impending troubles?

“By _____ Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were _____ of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;...” (Hebrews 11:23-24).

Moses is a wonderful example of how to confront difficulty head-on. He grew up with all the privileges and honors of a true prince of Egypt. However, he obeyed God's call to leave that life of luxury, and instead, submitted himself and assumed the position of an outcast.

“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the _____ of _____, than to enjoy the pleasures of _____ for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater _____ than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the _____” (Hebrews 11:25-26).

Do you think this decision was easy for Moses? He knew troubles would come; however, he kept his eyes on the goal and followed the direction of the Lord. You may ask, “Does this mean God intentionally leads us into hardship?” The answer may shock you: Yes, sometimes He does.

“By faith he _____ Egypt, _____ the wrath of the _____: for he endured, as seeing _____ who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27).

Every trial is an opportunity for you to take a step forward in your Christian growth. This is why the Bible can make such a seemingly outlandish statement: “Consider it all joy...when you encounter various trials” (James 1:2-4 NASB).

“My brethren, count it all _____ when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the _____ of your faith worketh patience. But let _____ have her perfect work, that ye may be _____ and _____, wanting nothing” (James 1:2-4).

When you face a trial head-on and conquer it, you build endurance. As that endurance builds over time, the result is a dramatic step forward in your spiritual maturity. Simply put, God does not want you to walk around your discouragements and difficulties. He puts them in your path for a reason: within them lie opportunities for growth and new insight. What might He be trying to teach you in the midst of your current struggles?

From this point on, will you count it all joy when you fall into troubles? Will you, like Moses, take a stand against the pressures of this world?

Today's Bible reading is Hebrews chapter 11.

LESSON 11

AN ANCHOR FOR THE TIMES OF DISCOURAGEMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 14:16

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

What do you do when the storms of life come? To whom do you turn? Where do you seek comfort and security during such difficult times? You know that storms come and go unexpectedly all throughout your life; yet, even though life tries to keep you off balance, Scripture assures you that you can maintain a steady footing, regardless of circumstances. How can you do that?

“Let your conversation be without _____; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may _____ say, The _____ is my helper, and I will not fear what _____ shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

There is an amazing truth in the Bible that can keep you steady during the most trying of times in life. Your anchor for the storms of life is simply this: Jesus Christ never changes.

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. _____ the same yesterday, and to day, and _____” (Hebrews 13:7-8).

Why is this truth so vital, and what does Scripture mean by “anchor?” Think about this: every single thing in your life—your career, relationships, and finances—is in a state of constant change. You yourself are even growing and changing every minute of every day; there is nothing you can do to stop this continual change.

“Be not carried about with divers and strange _____. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with _____; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein” (Hebrews 13:9).

If you try to hold tightly to things of the world during your hardships, you cannot keep from being pulled one way or another. Why? Because you have affixed yourself to something that is moving. You chose a foundation that isn't stable.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very _____ help in _____. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah” (Psalm 46:1-3).

When you anchor your hopes in Christ, you can be sure that the anchor will hold. He isn't moving, changing, or leaving. He is the same as He always has been. He is the only sure footing in a world of movement, and He can keep you steady.

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is _____; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah” (Psalm 46:10-11).

Today's Bible reading is Hebrews chapter 13.

LESSON 12

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND DISCOURAGEMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 14:16

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

Nothing is impossible for the Lord. No obstacle confuses or poses a challenge for God. Though He is sovereign over every situation, you may have trouble having this perspective when you hit difficulties and discouragement.

“_____ in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the _____, ye are the _____: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without _____ ye can do nothing” (John 15:4-5).

Are you experiencing a shift in focus? During trials, you will tend to take your eyes off the Lord, and instead see only your problems. The longer you look at your circumstances, the larger they seem. As you dwell on them, your mindset can become very discouraged. Though God still has a direction for you to take, you are no longer concentrating on His purposes.

“If a man abide not in _____, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in Me, and _____ abide in you, ye shall _____ what ye will, and it shall be _____ unto you” (John 15:6-7).

Are you developing an incorrect assessment of resources? During troubled times, you may start taking inventory of your strength and abilities. When they prove insufficient, you will easily become discouraged. The truth is that you don't have what is needed to handle life's trials—Jesus Himself told us that. However, God's capabilities are unlimited, His power is never-ending, and His wisdom is complete. You need to take stock of His resources, and not your own.

“Henceforth I call you not _____; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you _____; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen _____, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth _____, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that ye _____ one another” (John 15:15-17).

Are you viewing obstacles as barriers? For the believer, impediments represent opportunities, and not problems. The Lord can demonstrate His awesome power through your difficulties. At such times, you grow in your faith and learn more about your Father. If you view hardships simply as troubles, then you can miss demonstrations of God's love, power, and wisdom.

Start each day with a Christ-centered focus and with a dependence on His resources; have an “opportunity” mindset. List some obstacles that you will give to God to help you overcome:

Today's Bible reading is John chapter 15.

LESSON 13

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR A DISCOURAGED HEART

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Proverbs 14:16

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

How would you describe God? Would you use words such as “holy,” “loving,” “omnipotent,” “wonderful,” or “almighty?” What is your concept of God? Do you think of Him as your Encourager? The way you view God influences the way you relate to Him and to others.

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our _____, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the _____ wherewith we ourselves are comforted of _____” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

The Bible describes God as the God of comfort. Comfort is another word for encouragement; it can change your outlook, attitude, and feelings of discouragement. All of us go through difficult times. A specific situation or hardship may trouble your heart. When your heart is troubled, where do you turn for comfort? When your world feels as if it is falling apart and you feel discouraged, what do you do?

“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by _____. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your _____ and _____, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is _____, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the _____, so shall ye be also of the consolation” (2 Corinthians 1:5-7).

Every believer should have assurance of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—the Comforter, Helper, and Encourager.

When facing darkness, look for God's light. Pray and search God's Word, and He will begin to lighten the way. Though circumstances may be the same, and pain still exists, your spirit will feel revived and your perspective will change. Your focus will be on God instead of on the difficulty.

“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our _____ which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above _____, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in _____, but in _____ which raiseth the dead: Who _____ us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we _____ that He will yet deliver us;...” (2 Corinthians 1:8-10).

What are you facing today? Whatever happens in your life, God is always there.

Do you believe that God will deliver you?

How will He do this?

How do you describe God?

Today's Bible reading is 2 Corinthians chapter 1.

LESSON 14

PREPARATION TO BATTLE DISCOURAGEMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 41:10

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee;
yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

Spiritual warfare is real. Every day, an unseen battle rages around and in you. To fight victoriously, you need to dress properly and carry the right weapons. It sounds simple enough, and the Word of God even tells you what to wear and what to fight with. However, the problem is that all the equipment is spiritual in nature and must be utilized by faith.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of _____. Put on the whole _____ of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against _____ in high places” (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Ephesians 6 provides instruction on the spiritual armor available to believers:

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to _____ in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with _____, and having on the breastplate of _____; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of _____; Above all, taking the shield of _____, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of _____, and the sword of the _____, which is the Word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all _____ and _____ for all saints;...” (Ephesians 6:13-18).

Pray, “Lord, I choose to put on the helmet of salvation today to guard my thinking. I desire to have godly thoughts, ones that please You and keep my identity with Christ.”

“And be not _____ to this world: but be ye _____ by the renewing of your _____, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, _____ of _____” (Romans 12:2).

“Thank you, Father, for the breastplate of righteousness, which helps to protect my heart and emotions from the influence of the Enemy.”

“Keep thy heart with all _____; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

“Enable me to establish godly affections.”

“But the fruit of the _____ is love, joy, peace, _____, gentleness, goodness, _____, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23).

“Thank you also for the girdle of truth. I desire my whole life to be encircled with Your truth—I want to know it, live by it, and share it with others. Help me to set aside time each day to meditate on the Bible. Father, wherever You send me, I want to wear the sandals of peace and be a peacemaker.”

“Blessed are the _____: for they shall be called the _____ of God” (Matthew 5:9).

Your spiritual preparation makes it possible for you to stand firm in the Lord.

Today's Bible reading is Ephesians chapter 6.

LESSON 15

FACING THE MOUNTAIN OF DISCOURAGEMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 41:10

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee;
yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

The Bible uses the word “mountain” to mean different things:

- A geographical location:

“Yet have I set My king upon My _____ of Zion” (Psalm 2:6).

- A metaphor for stability:

“LORD, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand _____: Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled” (Psalm 30:7).

- A barrier, hindrance, or obstacle:

“Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a _____: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it” (Zechariah 4:7).

As a disciple of Christ, you are not guaranteed an easy life. You may face many mountains (trials, difficulties, and hardship) throughout your life. How do you respond when facing what appears to be an overwhelming obstacle, problem, or dilemma? Do you panic? Do you feel discouraged? Do you feel like giving up?

“Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the Word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by _____, nor by _____, but by My _____, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

What do you feel is looming before you like an impossible mountain? Work conflict, relationship problems, finances, bad health, or an uncertain future?

“_____; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will _____ thee; yea, I will _____ thee; yea, I will _____ thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

“Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes _____ upon the _____ our God, until that He have _____ upon us” (Psalm 123:2).

What are some “mountains” you have in your life now?

How will you face and overcome these mountains?

No matter what you are facing or how easy or difficult the task may be, always look to God.

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 123.

LESSON 16

MOLDED BY THE MASTER: YOU ARE NOT WORTHLESS

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 41:10

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee;
yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

Discouragement can really overcome you if you allow yourself to entertain thoughts of worthlessness. If you constantly think things like, "I can't do anything right," or "I'm not loveable," you have placed yourself on a defeatist track.

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, _____, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to _____ my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the Word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this _____? saith the LORD. Behold, as the _____ is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:1-6).

God never considers you to be worthless. When He sees you, He beholds an individual with potential and great value. To you He says, "Behold, like the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand."

"Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in _____, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose _____ departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that _____ in the LORD, and whose _____ the LORD is" (Jeremiah 17:5-7).

A shapeless lump of clay may seem useless, but in the hands of a master potter, it can become a rare and precious treasure. You may wonder about the trials you are undergoing that make you feel discouraged. Why does life seem so hard?

"For he shall be as a tree planted by the _____, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of _____, neither shall cease from yielding _____" (Jeremiah 17:8).

"The heart is _____ above all things, and desperately _____: who can know it? I the LORD _____ the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

"Behold, I have _____ thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of _____" (Isaiah 48:10).

He is forming your character into something that will last eternally. When you are in God's hands, He is making you into something priceless. You have worth because you are His priceless treasure.

Today's Bible reading is Jeremiah chapter 17.

LESSON 17

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR DISCOURAGEMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 41:10

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee;
yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy _____: and when thou art converted, _____ thy _____” (Luke 22:31-32).

Christ's battle was not against Rome—it was against sin. He saw the truth of the situation, whereas Peter had a limited view. Jesus understood that in the stressful events leading up to the crucifixion, the disciples would be filled with sorrow and confusion; Jesus knew that Peter would fail.

“And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice _____ that thou knowest Me” (Luke 22:33-34).

Jesus knows there will be times when you fail like Peter. Things will arise in your life—distresses, discouragement, pain—that will be extraordinarily difficult to stand against, and you will flounder. However, Jesus is interceding for you.

“Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. And _____ followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he _____ him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am _____. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I _____ what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the Word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and _____ bitterly” (Luke 22:54-62).

Nothing is really lost by a life of sacrifice; everything is lost by a failure to obey God's call. When you fall, do not be afraid of God. He always accepts you with open arms. Focus instead on His forgiveness and on honoring Him with your life.

Today's Bible reading is Luke chapter 22.

LESSON 18

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TIMES OF FAILURE

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 41:10

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee;
yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

Have you failed? Are you discouraged? Are you bothered by emotions of embarrassment and remorse? Then, be encouraged! Simon Peter, one of the great disciples, failed and experienced the same things you may be experiencing. During Christ's trial and crucifixion, it was crucial that the disciples stayed together and kept their faith strong. Instead, they fled. Simon Peter went as far as denying his beloved Friend, Jesus, three times. However, when they met again after the resurrection, Jesus held no malice for Peter.

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, _____ thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, _____ My _____" (John 21:15).

Jesus did not chastise Peter; rather, he emphasized that for Peter to truly show his love, he would have to take on the commission, "Tend My lambs."

"He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou _____? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I _____ Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My sheep" (John 21:16).

The same is true for you. God does not desire for you to remain ashamed. His direction is that you renew your commitment and take up the purpose for which He called you.

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest _____; thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, _____ My sheep" (John 21:17).

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death He should _____ God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, _____" (John 21:18-19).

Your greatest glory is never in being discouraged, but in rising each time you fall. You have no reason to live in shame. Rise again, and take on the godly life to which God called you. You may find that your biggest discouragement was the beginning of your greatest victory.

Discouragement is from Satan; what are you doing to overcome it?

Today's Bible reading is John chapter 21.

LESSON 19

OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT WITH PRAYER

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 41:10

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee;
yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

Discouragement is an inevitable part of every life, whether a person is saved or unsaved. The difference is that once a person becomes a believer, the Father strengthens him or her to face every difficulty; he or she is His child.

“And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, And said, O LORD God of our _____, art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee? Art not Thou our _____, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy _____ for ever?” (2 Chronicles 20:5-7).

Your omniscient and all-powerful God is greater than any problem in your life. He knows your future circumstances and prepares your heart and mind to withstand coming trials. The moment you encounter a problem, you can tap into His omnipotence. He promised to meet believers' needs; therefore, He is under His own divine obligation to give guidance and direction. Your first response should always be to call out, “Father!” Immediately, two things will take place: the problem's growth is stunted, and you are reminded of the unique position given to those who trust in the sovereign Lord.

“And they dwelt therein, and have built Thee a sanctuary therein for Thy name, saying, If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in Thy presence, (for Thy name is in this house,) and _____ in our affliction, then Thou wilt _____ and _____” (2 Chronicles 20:8-9).

God always gives a solution to every problem; however, you should not be sitting back and waiting for Him to work out the details. The Lord usually requires an act of faith from His child to jumpstart the resolution. Experience and trust should tell you that His solutions are always best, but human strength may falter when you hear what He asks of you. Thankfully, the One who gives you endurance also offers courage to act at the right moment.

“And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the _____ of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not _____ nor _____ by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but _____” (2 Chronicles 20:13-15).

Long before a crisis arises or a solution is needed, a wise believer will be consistently seeking God. In trouble-free times, you can build a foundation of trust and develop communication with Him that can help you withstand any hardship. Problems are unavoidable, but the Father is faithful to help bear your discouragement. Make a list of problems that are unsolved and take them to your Father in prayer.

Today's Bible reading is 2 Chronicles chapter 20.

LESSON 20

WHEN DISCOURAGEMENT COMES

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Isaiah 41:10

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee;
yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

Discouragement is inevitable. In nature, powerful tempests leave a changed landscape behind them. In your life, challenging circumstances can force you to shift direction.

“And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a _____, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, _____ with waves: for the wind was _____” (Matthew 14:22-24).

When difficulties arise, do you say to the Lord, “I am doing what you asked, so why is this happening?” Such thinking assumes that being in the center of God’s will exempts you from problems. In Matthew 14, Jesus instructed the disciples to get in the boat and go to the other side of the sea. As they were obeying Him, high winds and waves developed. The truth is, storms can arise even when you are exactly where God wants you to be.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have _____. In the world ye shall have _____: but be of good cheer; I have _____ the _____” (John 16:33).

Another question you may sometimes ask is, “Father, what have I done wrong?” Many of us automatically assume that we are a large part of the problem. God does use trials to correct you, but not all situations come from your mistakes. He may allow troubles to perfect you—that is, to mature you and help you grow into Christ’s likeness. This was the case with the disciples. Jesus knew what lay ahead for them, and He desired to make them fit vessels for the work He was calling them to do. The lashing winds created an environment conducive to learning key lessons for future ministry.

“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were _____, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for _____. But straightway _____ spake unto them, saying, Be of good _____; it is I; _____ not _____” (Matthew 14:25-27).

God uses all kinds of situations to train and equip you, because He wants you to become a strong, vital servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Realize that nothing can happen to a child of God unless He allows it. Instead of keeping your head bent low against the struggles of life, look up to the Lord, and seek His purposes in your challenges.

What things are you blaming God for not doing in your life? Is God really the one who should be receiving all of the blame?

Today's Bible reading is Matthew chapter 14.

LESSON 21

WHEN WE FEEL BURNED OUT OR DISCOURAGED

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 1 Peter 4:2

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Discouragement or burnout. In this fast-paced, overworked world, most of us have felt the tiring numbness of burnout and have become discouraged very easily. How should a believer in Christ respond to these feelings?

“Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the _____, the LORD, the _____ of the ends of the earth, _____ not, neither is _____? there is no searching of His _____” (Isaiah 40:27-28).

Surrender. Even if it does not seem like the right or easy thing to do, you must surrender everything you have to the Lord. His hands are large enough to hold anything and everything you need Him to handle. When you try to keep everything to yourself, you will eventually start to lose control.

“He giveth _____ to the _____; and to them that have no might He increaseth _____. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall _____ their _____; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be _____; and they shall walk, and not _____” (Isaiah 40:29-31).

Depend on Him. Have you ever given a concern to the Lord, only to find yourself trying to take it back? You probably tend to want to fix things yourself. However, the truth is that only God has the power to bring all matters to their proper conclusion. When you try to take things back, you will only interfere with the solution He wants to bring about.

“And we know that all things _____ for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to _____” (Romans 8:28).

Trust Him. Do not overlook this vital point: God loves you. Because of His great love, God wants to take care of you.

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than _____, and the body than _____? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your _____ feedeth them. Are ye not much _____ than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?” (Matthew 6:25-27).

Are you burned out or discouraged? If so, return to the Spirit and be rekindled today.

What do you desire to do for the Lord for the rest of your life?

Today's Bible reading is Matthew chapter 6.

LESSON 22

LIFTING THE WEIGHT OF OUR BURDENS AND DISCOURAGEMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 1 Peter 4:2

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Have you ever suddenly woke up in the middle of the night with a heavy burden on your heart? Whether emotional, financial, or relational, your burdens can weigh you down and make you discouraged; they can also spur you to action.

“As for me, I will _____ God; and the LORD shall _____ me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall _____ my voice” (Psalm 55:16-17).

In life, there are different kinds of burdens. Some, like an impulse to pray for others or a strong motivation to do God's will, are intentionally placed by the Lord and won't be lifted until He has accomplished His purpose through them. You will also have sin burdens, though; these burdens cannot be removed until confessed. You are not meant to carry burdens stemming from worries over daily life, family responsibilities, and the like.

“He hath _____ my _____ in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me. God shall _____, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not _____. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant” (Psalm 55:18-20).

You may tend to think of burdens as unavoidable in life, as if you were ordained to shoulder these difficulties yourself without “bothering” God about your trivial problems.

“Cast thy _____ upon the LORD, and He shall _____ thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. But Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will _____ in Thee” (Psalm 55:22-23).

Actually, your purpose in life is to walk obediently before God and to trust Him to handle any weightiness in your life. You are to cast every burden on Him by identifying what it is and then surrendering it into His care. Laying burdens down requires faith. When you trust God, He will sustain you as He has promised.

“Blessed be the Lord, who _____ loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our _____. Selah” (Psalm 68:19).

Are you carrying a heavy load? God wants to cradle you and your burdens in His hand. Make a list of the load you are carrying, and begin praying about it:

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 55.

LESSON 23

FIGHTING DISCOURAGEMENT WHEN THINGS SEEM IMPOSSIBLE

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 1 Peter 4:2

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Even Christ's disciples struggled with doubt and fear in times of trouble and uncertainty, and many times, they cast their focus in the wrong direction.

"After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great _____ followed Him, because they saw His _____ which He did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy _____, that these may eat?" (John 6:1-5).

Before He was about to perform the miracle of feeding the 5,000, Jesus tested Philip by asking him where to buy bread. Philip's response revealed that he was thinking of solving the dilemma through man's ideas and worldly means. At the same time, Andrew was busy surveying the crowd, trying to determine his own approach to the situation.

"And this He said to prove him: for He himself _____ what He would do. Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto Him, There is a lad here, which hath _____ barley _____, and _____ small _____: but what are they among so many?" (John 6:6-9).

As was true for all of His miracles, Jesus performed this amazing feat of compassion to prove who He was then and still is today. The very same Christ who fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish will act on your behalf when situations seem impossible.

"And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about _____. And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given _____, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as _____ as they would" (John 6:10-11).

In difficult times, when it seems all hope is lost, try not to look upon your discouragement from a worldly perspective. Don't ask, "What am I going to do?" Rather, in a spirit of faith, simply say, "Lord, what are You going to do?" He tells you to cast all of your cares upon Him because He cares for you.

"When they were _____, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled _____ baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten." (John 6:12-13).

Patience and faith will help you know God's grace and experience His love and miraculous touch in your life.

Today's Bible reading is John chapter 6.

LESSON 24

COURAGE TO FACE DISCOURAGEMENT'S TRIALS

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 1 Peter 4:2

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

The Bible's details of Paul's life reveal the courageous way he handled his trials. He was opposed by religious leaders, manhandled by magistrates, and mobbed by large crowds; yet, through it all, he stood firm in his allegiance to Christ.

“For I am now _____ to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the _____: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of _____, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that _____ His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Before dismissing him as superhuman, though, let's look at Paul's own testimony. He said that he came to the Corinthians in weakness, and he spoke with fear and trembling. He claimed that he had been pushed far beyond his ability to endure.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came _____ with excellency of _____ or of _____, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save _____, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the _____ and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the _____ of _____” (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

In fact, Paul's emotions were so strong that the Lord exhorted him not to be afraid; he was human just like us. What did Paul know that would also help us? Wherever the apostle was, God was personally present. Paul believed Jesus' promise to be with him to the end of time.

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am _____, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:20).

Paul trusted in the guiding presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and he also took heart from the Lord's reassurance of His nearness.

“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am _____, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them” (Acts 18:9-11).

Because we belong to Jesus Christ, we can know for certain that our God is always with us. We, too, have the Savior's unending pledge of nearness and the Holy Spirit as our permanent companion. As we embrace these truths, we will discover the courage to face life's discouragement. What a precious blessing: God is with you!

Today's Bible reading is Acts chapter 18.

LESSON 25

A COURAGEOUS LIFE WITHOUT DISCOURAGEMENT

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 1 Peter 4:2

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

When you recognize God's presence within you, courage starts to develop; it grows as you draw on His strength.

"The eyes of your _____ being enlightened; that ye may know what is the _____ of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power,..." (Ephesians 1:18-19).

Without God's enabling power, hardship and stress will drain you emotionally and hurt you physically. Such depletion leaves you spiritually vulnerable to Satan's attacks. The nation of Israel is a great example. They should have believed the two spies that trusted in the Lord's presence and power to help them. Instead, they allowed their weakness to sway them, and they sided with the remaining 10 spies, who claimed that the Canaanite obstacles were too great.

"Which He wrought in _____, when He _____ Him from the dead, and set Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far _____ all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the _____ over all things to the church, Which is His _____, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:20-23).

Paul faced the Romans after enduring great hardship, but was not dismayed because God stood with him and strengthened him. In fact, Paul discovered that the Lord's power in his life reached its peak when Paul was at his lowest point.

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My _____ is made perfect in _____. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the _____ of _____ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am _____, then am I _____" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Times of helplessness and weakness are, in reality, opportunities to receive an abundance of divine power.

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be _____. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be _____ and to be _____, both to _____ and to suffer _____. I can do all things through _____ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:11-13).

Instead of seeking a way out of discouragement and trials, accept God's way as Paul did, and you'll find courage. Imagine yourself standing next to God, drawing on His strength, and fulfilling His desires; that is a picture of courage. Name one trial that you are giving to God:

Today's Bible reading is 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

LESSON 26

REVIEW (PART I)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 1 Peter 4:2

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Multiple Choice

Read each question carefully, then mark the correct answer. There is only one correct answer to each question. The questions are based on Scripture and the lessons in this book.

1. As the deer panteth after:
 - a) Green grass
 - b) Water brooks
 - c) Other deer
2. Oh my God, my soul is cast down:
 - a) Within me
 - b) In the sea
 - c) In hell
3. Why is my soul:
 - a) Sad
 - b) Lifted up
 - c) Cast down
4. The Lord wants to be your:
 - a) Light
 - b) Strength
 - c) Savior
5. I desire that the Lord:
 - a) Set me upon a rock
 - b) Keep me safe
 - c) Make me rich
6. I will sing praises unto:
 - a) Man
 - b) My family
 - c) The Lord
7. We know all things work together:
 - a) To them that help each other
 - b) To them that love God
 - c) To them that read the Bible
8. Waiting on the Lord will:
 - a) Keep you safe
 - b) Strengthen your heart
 - c) Make you happy
9. Humble yourself under
 - a) The hand of God
 - b) Your spouse
 - c) Authority figures in the church
10. Be careful (anxious) for nothing, but do what?
 - a) Handle everything with prayer
 - b) Ignore life's problems
 - c) Give things to your church
11. The road to encouragement is to:
 - a) Sing songs
 - b) Have lots of money
 - c) Pray instead of worry
12. What will separate us from God?
 - a) No height, nor depth
 - b) Not going to church
 - c) Being sinful

Today's Bible reading is 2 Corinthians chapter 1.

LESSON 27

REVIEW (PART II)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 1 Peter 4:2

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

True or False

Read each statement below carefully, then enter "true" or "false" in the blank. The statements are based on Scripture and the lessons in this book.

1. Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life. _____
2. Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God. _____
3. Be still, and know that I am not your God. _____
4. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me. _____
5. Jesus went unto them by the sea walking on the beach. _____
6. Moses was hid for five months when he was born. _____
7. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into temptation. _____
8. Be content with such things as ye have. _____
9. God is your refuge and strength in times of trouble. _____
10. Remember them which have rule over you. _____
11. Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." _____
12. I can have no comfort in times of trouble. _____
13. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord. _____
14. Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. _____
15. Not by might, nor by power, but by myself. _____
16. Fear thou not: for I am with thee. _____
17. The heart is pure above all things. _____
18. Jesus does not view you in light of your failures. _____

Today's Bible reading is Ephesians chapter 2.



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