

TALK...

MAY 2-8

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 106:1-12

Confess the areas where you refuse to trust God. Ask him to help you see and remember how he has proven faithful in your life.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What passage most surprised you?

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Why did the Israelites want a king so badly?

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Have you ever heard God in the way that young Samuel did?

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Where did you see Jesus in the Old Testament?

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Why do you think Jesus' own brothers so completely misunderstood him in John 7:1-9?

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TALKING POINTS**OLD TESTAMENT (RUTH 2:1—1 SAMUEL 13:23)**

Ruth, the ancestor of King David (RUTH 4:18-22)

Hannah dedicates Samuel to the Lord (1 SAM 1:27-28)

The Philistines and the Ark of the Covenant (1 SAM 4-6)

“You will beg for relief from this king you are demanding.” (1 SAM 8:18)

Saul is anointed king over Israel (1 SAM 10)

NEW TESTAMENT (JOHN 4:43-7:30)

Jesus heals the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (JOHN 5:1-15)

“The time is coming . . . when the dead will hear my voice—the voice of the Son of God.” (JOHN 5:24)

John the Baptist and the Scriptures testify about Jesus' divinity (JOHN 5:31-40)

Jesus walks on water (JOHN 6:16-21)

“Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.” (JOHN 6:54)



Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the LORD.

1 SAMUEL 1:10

REFLECT ON 1 Samuel 1:10

In Old Testament times, a childless woman was considered a failure. Her barrenness was an embarrassment for her husband. Children were a very important part of the providing for the family's needs. Hannah had good reason to feel discouraged and bitter. But instead of giving up hope, Hannah prayed. She brought her problem honestly before God.

Even with today's medical advancements, couples face infertility with few guarantees. Like Hannah, couples can grow bitter and discouraged by being unable to change their situations. But like Hannah, couples have prayer as a resource for encouragement, and God as their source of hope.

Think of those couples in your circles who are struggling with God's timing in answering their prayers and who need your love and help. By supporting them, you may help them remain steadfast in their faith and confident in God's timing to bring fulfillment to their lives. Who can you encourage today that might be feeling hopeless?

REFLECTION THOUGHT

THINK OF THOSE IN YOUR CIRCLES WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH GOD'S TIMING.

WHAT IS THE RESURRECTION JESUS PROMISED?

Jesus spoke of a future resurrection of all people—either to eternal life or to judgment (John 5:28-29). He also promised that he would give new life to all who have believed in him (John 6:40; 11:25). When Christ returns, all his people will be resurrected to be with him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

This hope for resurrection characterized the outlook of the early Christians. They were able to endure their suffering because their eyes were fixed on what lay beyond this life (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). They expected Jesus to return and resurrect their bodies. They looked forward to living with him forever (1 Peter 1:23). Jesus' own bodily resurrection was the foundation of their Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:12-20).

The resurrection body will not have the limitations and failings that our present bodies have. Our resurrected bodies will be glorious, strong, immortal, and spiritual, like Christ's own resurrection body (1 Corinthians 15:45-49).

Because they are already joined to Christ, believers actually begin to experience resurrection existence here and now. They have already been "raised" with Christ. They have already been given resurrection life (Romans 6:4-11; Colossians 2:12). As a result, their lives are now centered in the spiritual realities of heaven, not the things of earth (Colossians 3:1-4). Believers can experience the transforming power of that new life here and now, the new life of the Spirit that frees them from the power of sin and death (Romans 8:1-4). In all the difficulties they face, their trust is not in themselves but in the resurrection power of God (2 Corinthians 1:9).

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REFLECT

PS 119

A WAY TO SEE



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TALK...

MAY 9-15

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 112:1-10

Pray for your work today. Ask God for a heart of generosity and fairness.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What did you find confusing or have questions about?

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What connections did you make between this week's readings and other Scripture passages?

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What do you think Saul's "tormenting spirit" (1 Samuel 16:14) might have been?

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How have your close spiritual friendships been like David and Jonathan's?

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Why do you think people had such a hard time accepting Jesus' claim to be the Son of God?

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TALKING POINTS**OLD TESTAMENT (1 SAMUEL 14–25)**

God rejects Saul because of his disobedience (1 SAM 15:10-31)

David serves as Saul's musician (1 SAM 16:14-23)

Saul turns against David (1 SAM 18)

The priests of Nob protect David and suffer the consequences (1 SAM 22)

"I will never harm the king—he is the LORD's anointed one." (1 SAM 24:10)

NEW TESTAMENT (JOHN 7:31–10:42)

Jesus promises living water (the Holy Spirit) to believers (JOHN 7:37-39)

"Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" (JOHN 8:7)

Jesus, the light of the world (JOHN 8:12)

"If I want glory for myself, it doesn't count. But it is my Father who will glorify me." (JOHN 8:54)

Jesus, the Good Shepherd (JOHN 10:1-18)



“Come on, let’s go over to where the Philistines have their outpost.”

1 SAMUEL 14:1

REFLECT ON 1 SAMUEL 14:1

Jonathan’s faith and action are a striking contrast to Saul’s indecision. Jonathan takes action, accompanied by one other soldier, but Saul waits, surrounded by 600 men. Jonathan carefully plans his strategy and anticipates God’s involvement, but Saul questions God and hesitates even as the Philistines scatter. Jonathan consults with his armor bearer, but Saul threatens his men with an oath. Jonathan waits for a sign from the Lord, but Saul makes an altar only as an afterthought. In summary, Jonathan keeps God in mind and acts with confidence, but Saul forgets God and is filled with doubts. When we live by faith—trusting in a good God—we can follow his leading with confidence and expect his guidance with certainty. When we continually keep God’s power always before us, we can boldly move forward in life.

If your life is filled with hesitation and indecision, what steps of faith can you take to express trust in God? As you do, stay attentive to God’s leading and be ready to continue or change course accordingly. Enjoy the freedom of trusting and obeying God.

REFLECTION THOUGHT

WHEN WE LIVE BY FAITH WE CAN EXPECT HIS GUIDANCE WITH CERTAINTY.

WHAT DOES REAL DISCIPLESHIP LOOK LIKE?

In the first half of John’s Gospel, he introduces a variety of people who model true discipleship (see John 1:19-51; 4:1-42; 9:1-41). Taken together, John provides a profile of the mature follower, or “disciple,” of Christ.

What is this profile of a disciple? Disciples know who Jesus is. In each story, titles for Jesus identify him correctly (see, e.g., John 1:34, 36, 38, 41; 4:19). Disciples believe in Jesus. They see Jesus’ mighty works, listen to his profound words, and believe (see John 4:39-41; 9:35-38). Jesus’ disciples understand that they must follow him if their discipleship is to be successful. Following implies genuine devotion, leaving behind what we have been focused on to embrace the journey with Jesus (John 1:37-43; 8:12; 21:19-22).

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TALK...

MAY 16-22

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 117:1-2

Pray for the nations and all people, that they might praise the Lord.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What passage most surprised you?

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Did you learn anything new or unexpected about God in this week's readings?

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What do you find most admirable or compelling about David?

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Why do you think Jesus was angry (John 11:33) about Lazarus's death?

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What do you think Jesus meant in John 12:8?

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TALKING POINTS**OLD TESTAMENT (1 SAMUEL 26—2 SAMUEL 11)**

Saul tries to communicate with Samuel through a medium (1 SAM 28)

Joab murders Abner, and David mourns (2 SAM 3:22-39)

The Ark of the Covenant is moved to Jerusalem (2 SAM 6)

“‘[David’s] throne will be secure forever.’” (2 SAM 7:16)

David commits adultery with Bathsheba and murders Uriah (2 SAM 11)

NEW TESTAMENT (JOHN 11–15)

Lazarus raised from the dead (JOHN 11:1-44)

“‘You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.’” (JOHN 12:8)

Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem (JOHN 12:12-19)

“Despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done, most of the people still did not believe in him.” (JOHN 12:37)

“‘You cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.’” (JOHN 15:4)

David asked the LORD, "Should I move back to one of the towns of Judah?"

2 SAMUEL 2:1

MAY 16-22



DISCUSSION GUIDE

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REFLECT ON 2 SAMUEL 2:1

David had good reasons to make Hebron his capital. At that time, Hebron was the largest city in Judah. Judah was David's own tribe, and he already had allies there (1 Samuel 30:26). Plus, David and his men were already close by, so they could settle there quickly. The city was secure against attack and centrally located in Judah. Moreover, many key trade routes converged at Hebron, making it difficult to cut off supply lines in wartime. The decision seemed obvious.

But David still asked the Lord for guidance. Although David was anointed to become king (1 Samuel 16:13; 23:17; 24:20), and although the time seemed right since Saul was dead, David still asked God if he should move. The Lord promptly responded to David's inquiry. David had made obedience a habit. God blessed David's attitude with clear and immediate direction.

Before moving ahead with what seems obvious, first bring the matter to God, who alone knows the right course. God sees all things. This includes details we don't know and things that are yet to come. When we ask God for guidance, he can see what we cannot. Whether it's clear or confusing, ask God for guidance.

REFLECTION THOUGHT

WHEN WE ASK GOD FOR GUIDANCE, HE CAN SEE WHAT WE CANNOT.

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH SAUL CALLING SAMUEL UP FROM THE DEAD TO CONSULT HIM?

The Old Testament forbids occult practices, including attempting to contact the dead (see Deuteronomy 18:9-12). People sought to contact the dead for guidance about the future. Consulting the dead was a capital offense (Leviticus 20:6, 27). God's people were instead to rely on God for divine guidance.

God buried Moses in an unmarked grave (Deuteronomy 34:6) because God did not want the Israelites to make it a shrine, present offerings to his spirit, worship him, or attempt to consult his spirit.

The Old Testament makes it plain that the dead cannot be contacted (Job 14:10-12). Samuel is the only known exception. God apparently commanded him to return and speak (1 Samuel 28:12-19). However, Saul's sin in consulting a medium was so severe that the writer of Chronicles singles out this failure when discussing Saul's downfall (see 1 Chronicles 10:13-14). There is never any justification for seeking advice from the dead when we have the living God and his word to guide us (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12-13).

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TALK...

MAY 23-29

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 119:129-152

Ask God for the light from his Word to guide your steps and give you understanding.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Was there anything in this week's readings that especially encouraged you or challenged you?

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What did you learn about God?

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When have you had to confront a friend about his or her sin? Have you ever been confronted?

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Have you ever had doubts about Jesus' death and resurrection? If so, how did you deal with them?

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How is God asking you to trust him?

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TALKING POINTS**OLD TESTAMENT (2 SAMUEL 12:1–20:13)**

“From this time on, your family will live by the sword.”
(2 SAM 12:10)

The birth of Solomon (2 SAM 12:24-25)

Absalom rebels against David, forcing him to flee
(2 SAM 15)

Joab has Absalom killed (2 SAM 18)

David shows mercy to the man who cursed him
(2 SAM 19:21-23)

NEW TESTAMENT (JOHN 16–21)

“So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again.”
(JOHN 16:22)

Jesus' arrest and trial (JOHN 18)

John takes Jesus' mother into his home after Jesus' death (JOHN 19:25-27)

“Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.”
(JOHN 20:29)

Jesus appears to his disciples by the Sea of Galilee (JOHN 21)

“Because you have shown utter contempt for the LORD by doing this, your child will die.”

2 SAMUEL 12:14

MAY 23-29



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REFLECT ON 2 SAMUEL 12:14

David confessed and repented of his sin (2 Samuel 12:13), but God’s judgment was that his child would die. David’s sin had irreversible consequences.

When God forgives us and restores our relationship with him, he doesn’t eliminate all the consequences of our wrongdoing. We may be tempted to think, “If this is wrong, I can always apologize to God,” but our actions may set events into motion that cannot be reversed.

God created the world to run according to his perfect plan. Our disobedience runs against God’s creation and has consequences. When we obey, we are living in line with God’s creation. But when we disregard God’s commands, we may suffer as a result, even if God has forgiven us for our sins.

REFLECTION THOUGHT

WHEN WE DISREGARD GOD’S COMMANDS, WE MAY SUFFER AS A RESULT, EVEN IF GOD HAS FORGIVEN US.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “BELIEVE IN JESUS”?

“Believing” occupies a central place in John’s Gospel. John does not use the noun “faith” that appears frequently elsewhere in the New Testament. John prefers the verb “believe” to underscore that faith is not static, like a doctrine or a dogma, but dynamic, requiring action. Believing in Jesus is what all true disciples do.

In the Gospel of John, the verb translated “believe” is often followed by the Greek word meaning “into.” No parallel exists for this in ancient Greek usage. For John, faith is not a status but an investment in the person of Jesus. Believing means accepting who Jesus is and what he claims to be. Believing constitutes a commitment to let his call on our lives change the way we live. Believing is the work God wants from us (John 6:29) as we abide in Jesus’ word, as we love him, and as we obey his commands (John 8:31; 15:1-17; see 1 John 5:10).

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