

Guided to the Cross Bible Study
Lent, 2024
Session 6 – Guided to Trust

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power; . . .
Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication.
To that end, keep alert and always persevere . . .*
(Ephesians 6:10, 18)
New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE)

INTRODUCTION: They are called “thru-hikers,” those who walk the entire Appalachian Trail from Springer Mountains, Georgia, to Katahdin, Maine. People admire them because thru-hikers take five to seven months out of their lives to continuously trek the whole path from beginning to end, no matter what bad weather, injury, illness or wrong turn they may encounter. Once they make it through the entire trail, thru-hikers report that they came to realize that they could go further and do more than they ever thought possible and that relying on the help and support of others is not a weakness but a sign of strength and awareness.

Our journey as Christians through the ups and downs of life can be just as grueling as hiking the Appalachian Trail. But when we rely on the help and support of Jesus, we know that he will carry us through every scenario we may encounter. Over time, we, too, come to realize that God “is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20, CEB). We can persevere because of him.

OPENING PRAYER

Holy Jesus, you endured the cross, scorning its shame. You bore your back to the whips of the soldiers. You let your head be crowned with thorns. You even took insults hurled at you without complaining. Help us to endure and to persevere when suffering comes our way because of sin in the world or because of persecution for our faith. Keep us strong and devoted to you all our days. Amen.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION – When have you persevered and come out on the other side better for it?

BEARING THE CROSS

Read **John 19:17-22**.

- Jesus bore the weight of the cross. But what else did he bear?
- Crucifixion was one of the most cruel forms of corporal punishment. What part of crucifixion do you think would be the most difficult to endure?
- Jesus was crucified at “the Place of the skull.” What ultimate cruelty does that name indicate?
- Jesus was crucified in a space where people walking by could see him. Why would that be especially difficult to endure?
- What insults did the people hurl at Jesus? (See Matthew 27:39-43.)
- Why was the sign above Jesus’ head such a flash point for people?

DON'T LOSE HEART

Read **Ephesians 3:11-21**.

- Why does St. Paul tell us not to lose heart in our struggles?
- Who gives us strength to persevere?
- What do we know in our heart of hearts that keeps us rooted and grounded in our faith journey?
- What is beyond our capacity to even understand?

WHAT THE LORD DESIRES

Read **Micah 6:7-8**.

- What are the three things that the LORD asks of us in our faith journey? How did Jesus carry out these three actions?
- What does God want from us?
- How is the question “Shall I give my firstborn...?” in this Old Testament reading a foreshadowing of what is to come?

THE ARMOR OF GOD

Read **Ephesians 6:10-18**.

- Whom are we fighting against in our faith battle?
- What helps us to stand firm in our faith?
- What are the important pieces of the armor of God, and what does each piece do for us to help us persevere in faith?
- How has Jesus made this armor available to us?

RESPONSIVE READING – PSALM 18:1-6, 31-35

18 I love you, O LORD, my strength.

2 **The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,**
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

3 I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies.

4 The cords of death encompassed me;
the torrents of destruction assailed me;

5 the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death confronted me.

6 In my distress I called upon the LORD;
to my God I cried for help.

From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.

31 For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God?—

32 the God who equipped me with strength
and made my way blameless.

33 He made my feet like the feet of a deer
and set me secure on the heights.

34 He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

35 You have given me the shield of your salvation,
and your right hand supported me.

English Standard Version (ESV)

**My faith looks up to thee, thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine!
 Now hear me while I pray, take all my guilt away,
 O let me from this day be wholly thine!**

**May thy rich grace impart strength to my fainting heart, my zeal inspire!
 As thou hast died for me, O may my love to thee
 pure, war, and changeless be, a living fire!**

**While life's dark maze I tread, and griefs around me spread,
 be thou my guide; bid darkness turn to day, wipe sorrow's tear away,
 nor let me ever stray from thee aside.**

**When ends life's transient dream, when death's cold, sullen stream
 shall o'er me roll; blest Savior, then in love, fear and distrust remove;
 O bear me safe above, a ransomed soul!**

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank you for giving us the strength to persevere in faith when life gets difficult and when we think we cannot go any further. Let us always remember the suffering path you trod on the way to the cross and all the indignities you experienced along the way. Just as you never turned way, help us never to turn away either. Amen.

VERSES FOR THE WEEK

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

New Living Translation (NLT)