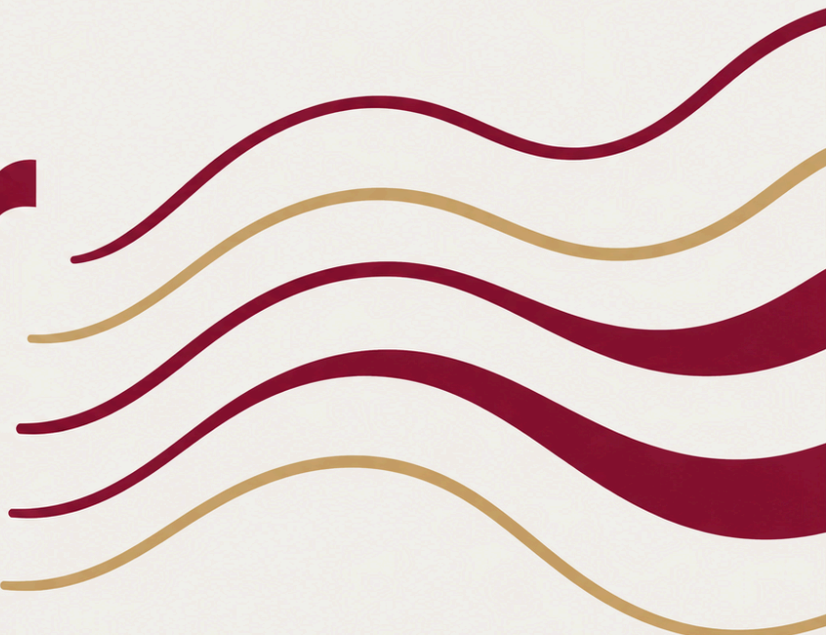


BIBLE STUDY

Water Ways



RESONATE

Water Ways

Water your problems?

We all have problems. How are we dealing with them? There are appropriate ways of coping but then there are some negative ones as well. We will explore both this week.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Exodus 17:1-2

Have you ever seen a child throw a temper tantrum? He gets mad about not getting his way and next thing you know, he is hollering, kicking, throwing punches, and doing whatever else he can to try to get what he wants. Of course, a wise parent does not give into this behavior. In fact, the child is usually disciplined.

As adults, we may not outwardly throw a temper tantrum but we may have one in our hearts. We get upset that life is not going the way we think it should. When we do this, our Heavenly Parent does not give into our behavior. The nation of Israel showcased many a temper tantrum. These adults could not stop acting like toddlers.

Exodus 17:1

1 The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

Verse 1-2: These people were facing a difficult time. They were in a place without water. That is a basic necessity of life. Understandably, we would be upset if we were deprived of water. Looking only at their situation, their complaints seems valid.

But before you begin to justify your negative attitude, I want you to focus on one phrase "traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded." They had been brought to this place by the Lord. God had led them to a place with no water. God leads us into difficult circumstances as well. I do not know what you have been through, the problems you may be facing now, or even what difficult circumstances are on its way but this truth I can tell you: no situation comes into your life without God allowing it.

Why would God allow problems into our lives? Shouldn't he just make our lives happy, easy, and problem-free? He could but where would our growth be? It takes the sun and the rain for a plant to grow. Good and bad times in our life stimulate growth in our lives. The Lord allowed the people to come to the end of their resources so they would turn to Him for help. Sadly, they turned to complaining instead.

Exodus 17:2

2 So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?"



Verse 2: I think this situation has some humor in it. Here Moses is in the exact same predicament as they are yet they say, “Give us water”. Their negativity had given them poor judgment. They expected a person to be the answer to their needs instead of God.

Moses recognized their sin and confronted them with the fact that their quarrel is not against a person but against the Lord. Whenever we get mad at our situation, we are in fact getting mad at God. We may not say it directly but the truth is that we are reacting to our circumstances thus we are reacting against the One who allowed the problems to come into our lives.

Whenever we complain, we are indirectly speaking against God. We are “testing” His sovereignty, His Lordship, His divine will. It is sin. Complaining leads to more problems as we will discover tomorrow. For now, let’s deal with any tendency to complain in our lives. We must stop testing the Lord.



DAY 1

Up Close and Personal

Confess any leanings toward complaining in your life.

What are problems that you are experiencing right now?

How will you deal with the situation that will honor the Lord instead of test Him?

If you know someone who complains to you, will you confront this sin in love?

If you are a complainer, will you ask forgiveness to those to whom you have complained?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Exodus 17:3-4

I worked with a lady who would complain all the time. She was negative about everything. One day she called me when I was having one of those wonderful types of days and feeling extraordinarily happy. By the end of our phone call, I felt depressed. Her attitude affected me and made me feel like the world truly was a dark place.

The Israelites complaints led to dark and gloomy thoughts. They became irrational the more they focused on their problems.

Exodus 17:3

3 But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

Verse 3: The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. They were in bondage. Eighty years earlier, the pharaoh had commanded the murdering of every male baby. They were being abused and mistreated. God had sent Moses to rescue these people from their terrible circumstances. He miraculously intervened through a series of ten plagues which resulted in their release from Egypt. When the Egyptian army pursued them, the Lord parted the Red Sea so the Israelites could walk through and then He closed the waters upon the Egyptians. Why would God do all that just to see His people die? Complaining leads to a wrong outlook on life as well as on God. We do not see Him or His ways clearly.

The people refused to stop their complaining and which led to a distorted view of life. When the complaining did not stop it led to irrational anger.

Exodus 17:4

4 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

Verse 4: The people were ready to kill Moses. The man who led them out of Egypt on the behalf of God is now having his life threatened. These people who had been mistreated were now mistreating others. Their negative ways had made them become cruel. Did they wake up thinking, "I think I will try to kill someone today"? No, they slowly came to this point because they refused to repent from their complaining spirit.



Complaining is a sin and it leads to more sin. It causes others to fall. I confess that at one of my former jobs I complained about another employee. This caused others to view this person differently. I led others into sin because I complained. My anger ultimately was against the Lord even if I didn't say it to Him. Deep down I wondered, "Why does that person have to work here?" God had allowed that person to work there and instead of asking for His help to deal with the person, I faced the situation with extreme negativity which led to a permanent rift between us. I was wrong.

If you are in the complaining stage, repent. If complaining has led to irrational thinking, repent. If irrational thinking has led to anger, repent. It's time to deal with the sin of complaining and its consequences now.



DAY 2

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to show you if the sin of complaining has led to more sin in your life or the life of others. Pray for His mercy and grace.

How have you experienced the sins that stem from complaining?

If we remove complaining from our lives, what should we replace it with?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Exodus 17:3-6

The Israelites give us an example of how not to handle problems. Moses, on the other hand, gives a clear picture of what we should do when difficulties come our way.

Exodus 17:3

3 But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

Verse 3-6: While the Israelites were complaining to Moses about water, they forgot one important fact: Moses was in the same place they were. He, also, was deprived water. It was not as if he had a case of bottled water in his tent. He was in the exact same circumstances. Yet, he handled the situation differently.

Exodus 17:4

4 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

Verse 4: Moses prayed. That is the answer to any problem you are facing. Don't go talk to co-workers and friends, for they may make it worse. Instead, go to the Lord first and talk to Him about what you are dealing with. He will listen to you. Listen also to Him. Through His Word, He will speak to you.



Exodus 17:5-6

5 The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Verse 5-6: God gave Moses specific instructions in handling the situation. Moses obeyed and everyone received the benefits.

I faced a difficult situation recently and prayed to the Lord about it. Through Bible study, I "heard" His answer; He told me to be still and wait for His deliverance. This was not easy for me to do. I wanted to "handle it". But I did as He said and the problem worked out in a marvelous way. Go to the Lord with your problems. Let Him direct you. Moses got to be a part of a miracle. The Israelites only got a complaining session. I'd much rather experience a miracle, wouldn't you?



DAY 3

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to show you what to do concerning the problems you are facing.

How will you make prayer a priority in your life?

How will you incorporate Bible study in your day to day routine?

What do you think the benefits of prayer and Bible study are?



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Exodus 17:7; Psalm 95; Matthew 6:25-33

In ancient times places were named as reminders of events. After the incident of no water and then water from a rock, Moses named the area after what had been experienced there. The names are not very nice.

Exodus 17:7

7 And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Verse 7: Massah and Meribah are far from weird words. Psalm 95 we discover that these words meant "'testing' for Massah and 'rebellion' for Meribah." (NIV text note). Whenever the Israelites were at that place they were reminded of their sin. Some of us have been led to difficult places by the Lord. How would He name them? Did we come through the situation with "humility and obedience" or with "testing and rebellion"?

Psalm 95 encourages us to not sin like the Israelites did at this point in their journey. This psalm was written hundreds of years after this moment in time. Even then, people were learning from the mistakes of Israel. We need to do the same today.

Psalm 95:8-11

8 do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert,

9 where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did.

10 For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways."

11 So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest."

Verse 8-11: The people had seen God's miraculous salvation. They had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt. Yet, they did not believe the Lord would provide for their need of water. Complaining is the antithesis of faith. Their lack of faith culminated in the refusal to believe they could win the fight against the Canaanites to claim the Promised Land. This led to a generation being punished. They wandered the desert for forty years. Lack of faith led to lack of purpose. They forfeited their right to live in the land of blessing.



We, too, have witnessed a miraculous salvation. We have been delivered from the bondage of sin. Whenever we complain, we are showing our lack of faith in the God whom we claim to trust with our eternal lives. If He can provide for our redemption from eternal death, surely He can take care of our day to day needs. Do not forfeit the blessings of peace because you are consumed with worry!

Matthew 6:25-33

25"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

28"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Verse 25-33: Complaining and worry go hand in hand. They are the result of lack of faith. We need to build our faith in the Lord of our salvation. In order to do this, we need to seek His kingdom and His righteousness. This puts our focus on the Lord instead of our problems. When we look at Him, He is magnified in our sight. We realize He is able to handle any situation in our lives. However, when we look at our problems, they are magnified. Thus the old adage, making a mountain out of a molehill. We must magnify God. This is done through praise.

Psalm 95:1

1 Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

Verse 1: Praise defeats complaining, negativity, and worry. If you have these qualities in your life, then you lack faith. You must build your faith through worship of God.

Psalm 95:2

2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

Verse 2: Thanksgiving is a focus on how God has provided in the past. This helps remind you that since the Lord has helped you before, He will be faithful to you again.



Psalm 95:3-5

3 For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods.

4 In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.

5 The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

Verse 1: Spend time meditating on the greatness of God. When you think about His power and might, you will realize how He can handle all of your problems.

Psalm 95:6-7

6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;

7 for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice,

Verse 1: Choose to worship Him. He is your Creator, He made you. He knows you through and through. The Lord loves you; He has called you as His own. He will guide you and care for you.

May complaining cease and praises ring out!



DAY 4

Up Close and Personal

Spend time in praise and worship of your Lord.

How do you usually handle problems?

How can you begin to cultivate a life of praise, even when facing difficult times?

What attribute of God encourages you as you are facing bad times?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Exodus 13:21-22; Psalm 105:41; Isaiah 55:6-8

I love the creativity of God. I am amazed by this aspect of who He is. The story we studied this week should remind us of His “creative solutions”. Recall the situation with me: the people were in a place without water. A logical solution would be: go to a place that has water. However, the people knew not to move. They at least were obedient in one aspect, they did not move unless the pillar cloud of God's Presence moved.

Exodus 13:21-22

21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.
22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Verse 21-22: The people were physically following the pillar cloud but their hearts were far from Him. As soon as the pillar cloud led them to a difficult place, their true thoughts were revealed. It is during difficult times that our true relationship with God is shown. We can say “praise the Lord” during good times but are we giving Him praise when life is hard? These people did not want to experience hardship. They wanted what they wanted now. Instead of waiting on God's answer, they tried to bully Moses. On the other hand, Moses asked for the Lord's help, and he got a creative solution: hit a rock.

Psalm 105:41

41 He opened the rock, and water gushed out; like a river it flowed in the desert.

Verse 41: This was no trickle of water. It was a gushing stream. God's answers to our problems are not mediocre. Instead, His creative solutions are more than ample to handle the situation.

What problem are you facing? Is it worse than no water in a desert? Please know that the God who worked a miracle for the Israelites is more than able to help you. The answer to your problem may be something you never even thought about because God thinks differently than you!



Isaiah 55:8

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.

Verse 8: To access the creative solutions of God, there are some things we must do. We must seek, call, and repent.

Isaiah 55:6-7

6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Verse 6-7: Seek the Lord. Do not focus on your problems, or your ideas of how to work it out, or even asking others what to do. Seek God. Call to Him, he will listen to your prayers. Repent of your sin whether it is complaining, worrying, or whatever else. Repent. Turn away from your futile ways of handling problems and let the Lord choose His timing and His way. Then, you will see His mighty work on your behalf!



DAY 5

Up Close and Personal

Thank the Lord that His ways and thoughts are higher than ours.

What are some creative solutions that God has worked in your behalf?

How does remembering God's intervention in the past help you now?

BIBLE STUDY

Water Ways

RESONATE

Water Ways

Water you afraid of?

Throughout life we are afraid of things. As children it may be the monster in the closet, as adults it may be the threat of unemployment or rising crime rate. Whatever fear there is, God can help. This week we will learn how to bring our fears to Him.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Isaiah 43:1; Jeremiah 1:5

Is there someone who knows you really well? Maybe it is a spouse, friend, or relative who can tell what you are feeling just by looking at you. Or perhaps you are the type who hides your feeling so no one truly knows how you think or feel. Others are just the opposite, sharing their emotions with everyone. No matter your personality type, God knows your heart. He is well acquainted with you because He created you.

Isaiah 43:1a

1 But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not..."

Verse 1: God created you. He knows all about you. He understands you more than you understand yourself. He knew you before you even came to be.

Jeremiah 1:5

5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Verse 5: Before your conception, the Lord knew your personality, everything you would do in life, your birthday and even your date of death. He realizes what you are afraid of. He is fully aware of what you are facing in life. This God wants to tell you "Fear not."

Please note that God does not say, "If you are feeling brave, then do not be afraid" or "Try to not think about it" or "I wish you wouldn't be fearful". He does not give options. He gives a command. "Fear not." The same God who tells us not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to steal, not to gossip tells us not to fear.

How can we not be afraid? The situation has not changed. We are still facing a looming problem of some sort. How do we obey this command? By changing our focus.

Isaiah 43:1b

1 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."

Verse 1: When we look at our problems, they are magnified into giant monsters ready to attack us. When we look at our God, He is magnified as our Redeemer, Savior, and Father.



Redeem means to “buy back”. You were enslaved to satan. With His precious blood, Jesus redeemed you from eternal death. He cherished your life and valued you so much that He gave His life for you. Would your Redeemer fail to help you in your difficult circumstances now?

A Savior is someone who saves. Jesus saved us from our sins by taking our sin upon Himself on the cross. He chose to save you. Before time began, He picked you out, He called your name and said, “That one right there, I am going to save that one.” If He would make the ultimate sacrifice to save you for eternity, would He not save you from your present problems?

He is your Father, your Parent. He has done everything to prove His affection for you. Would you trust His love for you?



DAY 1

Up Close and Personal

Praise your Creator, Redeemer, Savior, and Father. Lavish affection on Him for all He has done for you.

In the back of most Bibles is a section called a “concordance”. In it, you can look up a word and it will tell you places in the Bible where the word is found. It will give you an abbreviated listing of the name of the book plus the chapter and the verse. For example, if I looked up the word “fear” the first listing in my concordance is “Dt 6:13”. Near the beginning of my Bible there is a page called “abbreviations” so I can discover that Dt stands for “Deuteronomy”. (You can locate your abbreviation page by looking at the Table of Contents). The numbers “6:13” means chapter 6, verse 13. By using your concordance, find verses on Redeemer, Savior, and Father. Write the ones that are meaningful to you below.



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Isaiah 43:2; Job 1:8, 4:7-9, 42:7-9

I have to tell you the truth: problems will come your way. From minor incidents to overwhelming situations, you will face difficult times. Often we question why hardships come into our lives. As believers, we feel like somehow we should be shielded from pain. That is not a biblical principle. We live in a fallen world. Believers and unbelievers alike suffer in this world. However, when believers suffer we are not alone.

Isaiah 43:2

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Verse 2: There is one verse in there that sums up life's reality for us: "when". It is not "if" you go through difficult times it is "when" you go through them. You will pass through water and fire in life. You may not know the exact time of their arrival, but you can expect that they will arrive.

The following thought is true but it may not feel too comforting: problems will come, it is just a matter of time. But let it comfort you in the fact that it happens to everyone. Often we feel so alone when we suffer through a trial. Often our loneliness is magnified because we act as if believers should not face tough issues. This lie has been believed for thousands of years. Job was told the same thing.

Job was a righteous man who loved God and His family. Yet, this man faced mind-boggling tragedy. In one day all of his children die, all of his wealth is stolen, and most of his servants were murdered. Not long after that, his health deteriorated to the point of him having boils all over his body. I would call that a difficult season in life, wouldn't you?

If Job was not already struggling enough, some "friends" come to encourage him. This is what they told him.

Job 4:7-9

7 "Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?

8 As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.



9 At the breath of God they are destroyed; at the blast of his anger they perish.

Verse 7-9: Basically his friends told him that the reason that all this bad stuff happened in his life was because he was being punished by God. Yet, they were wrong. God Himself had called Job righteous.

Job 1:8

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

Verse 8: Even the righteous face difficult times. Do not feel that it is due to a lack of faith or that you haven't been good enough or God is up in heaven waiting to punish people. The truth is, bad stuff happens. Sometimes it may be the consequences of our sins. Other times it is because we live in a fallen world. However, whatever comes our way we can know this truth: we are not alone.

Isaiah 43:2

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Verse 2: The Lord is with us. We do not need to be afraid because He is walking through the trial with us. God does not abandon us when we are facing hard times. Instead, He is close enough to hear our voice over the rushing waters and able to see us in the smoke of fire. He is right beside us. And He gets mad at anyone who tells you differently.

Job 42:7-9

7 After the LORD had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. 8 So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

Verse 7-9: It was the friends of Job who had it all wrong. They thought suffering meant God was punishing him. They were not right. Job was righteous yet he faced some of the most difficult times of anyone who ever lived. He had to pray for his friends who were still living in "prosperity" but were considered by God as the sinners in the situation. Job was close to God and God was close to Job. Even as he passed through the water and the fire.



DAY 2

Up Close and Personal

Thank the Lord that He is with you whenever you face difficult circumstances.

How will you fight the lie that God is far away from you?

In what ways have you been discouraged by others when you were already dealing with difficult circumstances?

How will you lift someone up who is facing a rough time?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Isaiah 43:2-3; Proverbs 3:5-6

God is with us during difficult times. You do not have to be afraid for the Maker of heaven and earth is with you. Of course, that seems easy to write when I am sitting comfortably in my office. But are these words true? How do we know for sure? In order to encourage us to believe, the Lord reminds us who is making the promise.

Isaiah 43:2-3

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

3 For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.

Verse 2-3: You will make it through difficult times not based upon your own merit, your own skill, your own ability to handle crisis, your family connection, your money, or your power. Instead, you will walk through times of trial and come out the other side because the Lord has said you would.

When I was a child we would promise one another things. If someone asked you to not tell a secret you would say "I promise" or maybe it would be to help them and you would respond with "I promise". Of course, my promise did not always hold up because something may prevent me from keeping my word or because I decided to break my promise. In my fallen human state, I broke many a promise. The Lord is not promising anything in these verses. He is telling you what will happen. "I will be with you; the trial won't overwhelm you; you will make it through this. Why? Because I am the Lord."

Does everyone have this confidence? No, not everyone, only those who know the Lord personally. When the Lord becomes your God then the provision of His Presence is extended to you. God will walk through the trials with you because you are His own. You became His own when you accepted Him as your Lord and Savior.

If the Lord is our Lord and He is always with us, why do we worry during trials? Because we are choosing to sin. Whenever we choose to stress out, we are in effect saying, "God, I just don't think you can handle my problems." It seems foolish but all of us have been guilty of it.

We must choose to take the Lord at His Word and accept that He will do as He told us.



Proverbs 3:5-6

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Verse 5-6: Your path may lead straight through water or straight through fire but you can know that God is directing you through it. You will not be in your time of trial forever. But you must cross through to the other side. The Lord, the Holy One of Israel, will ensure that you will make it.



DAY 3

Up Close and Personal

Confess anything you are worrying about. Choose to trust God to guide you through your problems.

When are you most vulnerable to the sin of worry?

How do you turn worry into trust?

How will focus on the fact that you will get “through” the problems with the Lord’s guidance help you when facing difficult times?



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Romans 8:28-29; Isaiah 42:23-25, 43:3

One of the most comforting thoughts to me as I face difficult times is that there is a purpose for everything that I am going through. I may not know how it will all work out in the end but I can trust that God is in control, He has allowed this situation in my life, and He is walking with me through it.

Romans 8:28-29

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Verse 28-29: The purpose of all of our circumstances is to conform us into the image of Christ. Difficult times are often the catalyst the Lord uses to bring godliness into our lives.

C.S. Lewis wrote in his book *The Problem of Pain*, that "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

God shouts in our pain. He wants to get our attention. Sometimes He will use strange ways to achieve His purposes, but in His desire to make us more like Christ, He is willing to allow all types of situations to come our way, even painful ones.

The nation of Israel experienced this first hand. They had been rebellious toward God so He punished them.

Isaiah 42:23-25

23 Which of you will listen to this or pay close attention in time to come?

24 Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned? For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law.

25 So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart.

Verse 24-25: The Lord allowed Israel to be defeated by foreign armies because He wanted them to turn from their sin. He allowed the difficult times but it was to serve His purpose. It was to cause His people to return to Him. He wanted them to hear His voice and obey Him.



Once they returned, He would cause the enemy that had previously been triumphant to now be defeated.

Isaiah 43:3

3 For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.

Verse 3: In the book Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee, the author comments on this passage. He states:

He does not lower His high standard in salvation. How could God give Egypt and Ethiopia a ransom for Israel? The answer is simple. God says in effect, “I used these nations to discipline you. I gave them, that is, I permitted them to treat you as they did, and now I will judge them.”

In Proverbs 21:18 we read, “The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the

transgressor for the upright.” Have you ever wondered why God permitted the enemy to cross your path and cause you all the trouble he did? He did it in order to bring you into line and in order to develop you spiritually. God gave him for your deliverance. Proverbs 11:8 says, “The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.” God wants us to become more like Him. He will go to any lengths to carry out His Word to conform us into the image of Christ. Whether our problems stem from our sin or just because we are in this world, we need to allow the situation to mold us so that it has served an eternal purpose in our lives.



DAY 4

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to speak to you and show you any area of your life that He wants conformed to the image of Christ.

Can you testify to the truth of the C.S. Lewis quote? When have you heard God shouting in your pain?

Why is God concerned about us being conformed into the image of Christ?

How can you learn from difficult times instead of just getting through them?

What does God desire to change in you at this point in your spiritual journey?

How will you implement this change?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Isaiah 51:7, 54:4; Jeremiah 42:11; Lamentations 3:57-58; Haggai 2:4-5; Romans 8:15-16; 1 Peter 3:13-17; 1 John 4:16-18

On Day One we learned God commands, "Fear Not". The following verses are "Fear Not" verses found throughout the Bible. These are just a sample of them all. I have heard that there are 366 verses telling us to not be afraid. That is at least one a day for a year, no matter what we face. Read the verses below and put a checkmark next to the ones that relate to what you may be going through. Be willing to commit them to memory. Even if you are not facing a trial at this moment, I guarantee sometime soon you will. These verses will be a comfort to you then.

Isaiah 51:7

7 "Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have my law in your hearts: Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults.

Isaiah 54:4

4 "Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.

Jeremiah 42:11

11 Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear. Do not be afraid of him, declares the LORD, for I am with you and will save you and deliver you from his hands.

Lamentations 3:57-58

57 You came near when I called you, and you said, "Do not fear."

58 O Lord, you took up my case; you redeemed my life.

Haggai 2:4-5

4 But now be strong, O Zerubbabel,' declares the LORD. 'Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,' declares the LORD, 'and work. For I am with you,' declares the LORD Almighty. 5 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'



Romans 8:15-16

15For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

1 Peter 3:13-17

13Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." 15But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 17It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

1 John 4:16-18

16And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. 17In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 18There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.



DAY 5

Up Close and Personal

Spend time in prayer, focusing on the God who is more powerful than anything you might face.