

Endurance Under Pressure: Walking by Faith

D Group study based on Jon Bloom's article "Is Life Harder than You Expected?"

Article found at desiringgod.org, posted July 14, 2017.

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Read the following excerpt aloud as a group:

"Soldiers don't learn to fight in the classroom. They learn about fighting in the classroom.

Learning about fighting is crucial to successful fighting, which is why soldiers' training always includes class time. But learning about fighting is not the same thing as fighting. Soldiers never really learn to fight until they are forced to actually do it. And when they do, they discover the actual, concrete experience of fighting looks and feels very different than the abstract idea of fighting.

Disciples of Jesus don't learn to walk by faith — to fight the good fight of faith — in the classroom. They learn about faith in the classroom — sermons, conferences, books, articles, videos. Learning about faith is crucial to successful walking by faith, which is why disciples' training always includes class time. But learning about walking by faith is not the same thing as walking by faith...

He [God] often takes us out of the classroom — where we thought we understood things — into the chaotic, disorienting, disturbing, desperate violence of the field of spiritual battle, where we encounter internal and external enemies too powerful for us. He brings us up against obstacles too big for us, problems too complex and difficult for us, and burdens so far beyond our strength that we at times despair of life itself (2 Corinthians 1:8)."

Discuss the comment, "Learning about walking by faith is not the same thing as walking by faith."

- Is it important to learn *about* what we believe and how we can endure? Why?
 - Read Romans 6:3, 6, and 9. What are some things Paul says we "know" according to these verses?
 - God wants us to *know* things! This is why He has given us His Word.
- Is *knowing* information about God and the Bible all we need? What passages of Scripture can you think of that support your answer?
 - Romans 6:8 says that if we died with Christ, we _____ that we will also live with Him.
 - Romans 6:11 says to "count" or "consider" yourself dead to sin and alive to God.
 - What is the difference between knowing something and believing/counting it?
 - Romans 6:12-13, 17 says "do not let" and "do not offer", as well as "offer" and "obey".
 - We must first know something in order to believe it. And when we believe it, we will act. We will respond by **DOING** what God calls us to and empowers us for through His Holy Spirit. Our works show our faith (James 2:18).

Another excerpt from Jon Bloom's article:

"When we pray with David, "teach me your way, O Lord" (Psalms 27:11), God answers. And his answers often look and feel very different from what we thought we were asking for.

The bewilderment, fear, and sorrow David expressed in many of his psalms lead me to think that trusting God proved far harder than he expected.

But it was, in fact, the crucible of these very hard situations where David learned how to really trust God, and how to really pray, and how to really worship. David prayed, “teach me your way, O Lord” (Psalm 27:11) during a desperate, dangerous moment. And that desperate, dangerous moment (along with many others) was itself a means God used to answer that prayer.”

- **Discuss some of the challenges David faced in his lifetime.**
 - What specifically about God does David often focus on in the Psalms? (Many of the Psalms were written by David and express how he was responding to God!)
 - What are some of the lessons David learned through his hardships?

Our final excerpt from the article:

“God answered David far more abundantly than David asked and likely thought (Ephesians 3:20). God used these dark, desperate, crushing moments to make David “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Samuel 23:1), providing songs and prayers for the life of faith to all Israel (Galatians 6:16) during its entire militant, embattled existence in this hostile, devil-governed world (1 John 5:19).

So, do you still want God to teach you his ways?

It’s not surprising if we respond viscerally to this whole idea, “If that’s how God answers, I think I’ll pass.” But we must not listen to that inner voice. That voice always counsels us to indulge in easy things that end up robbing us of great joy, and to avoid hard things that end up increasing our great joy. Yes, “the way is hard that leads to life” (Matthew 7:14). But it leads to life! The easy way leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13).

So, if we really want to follow Jesus, if we really want to learn his ways (Psalm 27:11), if we really want “to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord (Colossians 1:10), which is to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), how should we expect him to teach us?

We should expect him to force us out of the classroom and on to the real field of spiritual battle where the conflict is much more chaotic, disturbing, disorienting, frightening, depressing, and sorrowful than we ever expected. And we should expect experiences that make the psalms living and active songs for our desperate souls.

It is in these experiences where — like good soldiers, like true disciples — we learn how to really fight and how to really trust. It is there, like David, where we learn God’s way and “take hold of that which is truly life” (1 Timothy 6:19) and taste that which is truly joy.”

- What are some challenges you are facing in your life currently? Where are you tempted to quit?
- What truth in this article can help you endure? What does God promise to do as you do so?

Taking Time to Pray

Ask God to help you live out your faith. Ask for his forgiveness for when your wrong thoughts about Him or for when you stop believing what He says is true. Ask him for grace to endure in your specific challenges and trials...and believe that the trying of your faith produces endurance! Pray the following passage:

James 1:2-4 “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”