

What's so Great About Faith? – August 3 & 4, 2019
Follow-up Bible Studies

Written by Maggie Baxter

Day One: Psalm 91

- Who rests in God's shadow (1)? What does the psalmist say to the Lord (2)? When do you need shelter, shade, refuge or a fortress? Do you trust God to provide these things for you? What is the psalmist sure of (3-4)? Both masculine and feminine – God's safety is perfect and comprehensive. Pray you'd be able to trust him with your worries, your secrets, etc.
- Miraculously, what will God-followers *not* fear (5-7)? Instead of fearing, what do we do (8)? What do you think makes it possible to be unafraid in the face of such things? What happens when we put our trust in the Lord (9-10)? How does this play out (11-13)?
- How does God respond to those who love him (14-16)? While he doesn't always spare us from trouble, he is *with us* in the midst of it. Do you trust him to competently follow through on all these promises? What about your heart – does it trust that God will always be your number one safe person? Respond to the Lord.

Day Two: Matthew 14:22-33

- Describe the setting (22). What transpired at night and just before dawn (23-25)? How did the disciples respond (26)? What did Jesus say to them (27)? When has God "immediately" reassured you, and how did such reassurance impact your faith?
- What did Peter say to Jesus (28)? Why do you think he said this? In that moment, where did he fall on the faith-doubt spectrum? What happened next (29)? Describe Peter's return to fear (30). Keeping one's eyes on Jesus is a great picture of faith. What other imagery helps you understand what it means to trust the Lord?
- How did Jesus "immediately" respond to Peter's fear (31)? The answer to Jesus' question is rather universal: when we take our eyes off God, our faith dwindles. What is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about this assertion? How did this scene on the water conclude (32-33)? After reading and reflecting on this passage, what faith-filled "Truly..." statements can *you* make about Jesus?

Day Three: Luke 18:9-14

- Describe this parable's audience (9). Place yourself among them. Relying to at least some degree on our own righteousness, we fail to rightly and humbly put our full weight on God. Ask the Lord to show you the ways this is true in your own life.
- Set the scene of the parable (10). Describe each man (10). Describe the Pharisee's prayer posture (11). What words did he pray (11-12)? Some translations say he prayed to *himself*. What is your response to his prayer? Does it demonstrate trust in the Lord? How do you think God himself feels about it?
- Describe both the posture and words of the tax collector's prayer (13). Only one man was justified; whom (14)? What is the method of justification (14)? What is the takeaway of this parable (14)? Today, in prayer, thought, word and deed, how can you humble yourself and put your full weight on God?

Day Four: John 1:43-51

- Set the scene of this text (43). What did Jesus say to Philip (43)? Describe the conversation Philip then had with Nathanael (44-46). What do you make of Nathanael's response in 46? He doesn't yet see that something great can come out of nothing. How would you describe what Philip then encouraged Nathanael to do? Is your faith unable to

look beyond the obvious, or is it more openhearted – are you willing to “come and see”? Respond to the Lord.

- Summarize Nathanael’s encounter with Jesus (47-51). How was he able to shift from doubt and dismissiveness to radical faith, seeing that indeed something good can come from Nazareth?
- Meditate on verses 50 & 51. When Jesus tells Nathanael he “will see greater things,” imagine him speaking to you. What “greater things” – the Kingdom of God breaking in – have you seen, and how does this influence your faith? Pray for eyes that notice what God is doing and for a heart that always responds in praise.

Day Five: James 2:14-26

- What two things does James contrast (14)? How does he initially argue that faith without works is dead (14-17)? Faith is not simply a matter of checking a box next to certain doctrinal statements. How would you define it? Why do you think James saw action as the sign of authentic trust in Jesus?
- Why does faith without deeds fall short of the fullness of following Jesus (18-19)? What Old Testament evidence supports James’ claim (20-25)? Consider whether your actions accurately reflect your beliefs. What message do they send about your faith? During times of disappointment are you able to keep the faith?
- How does James conclude this section on “faith and deeds” (26)? Read Joshua 6:17. Rahab plays a critical role in God’s story not because of her beliefs but because of her *actions*. May your actions be ones that exude both belief that something can come out of nothing and desire to walk with God throughout your life.