

refuge

WEEK FOUR: HELP FOR MY DESPAIR

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God's presence and activity in our lives is the key to overcoming despair. Developing a relationship with Jesus, hearing His voice, and following Him are ways we start erasing fear. Another way we can overcome doubt is by strengthening our faith. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus tells us to "go and make disciples ... baptizing them ... teaching them ... I am with you always," which leads us to this lesson: *your faith will grow as you go.*

Where Am I Today?

- 1) Our stories of God's protection or intervention—or His action and response to our prayers—are the basis for future faith. Do you have you a personal story (or testimony, as in 1 John 5:10) about how God has answered you or rescued you in the past? How does that affect your today?

Into the Bible

- 2) "He calls us to be followers, not fans!" One way to stay focused on Jesus, defeat despair, and strengthen our faith is to get involved in doing what God has asked us to do. In His Word, He has left us blueprints for living. He's given us jobs to do, but He doesn't ask us to do them alone. His power and presence are felt as we obey. Check out these tasks and promises:
 - a. **Luke 10:25-28**
 - b. **Matthew 10:42**

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- c. **Galatians 5:13-18**
 - d. **Romans 12:6-13, 21**
- 3) **Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.** Of all the things God asks us to do, being a witness to the Good News that Jesus came, died for our sins, and rose again is probably the most important. Be a witness that He is alive today as evidenced in your *own* life. Really following Jesus is all about sharing the Good News! Write down the high points of your spiritual journey. Add a few instances of how Jesus has changed your life and how He is working in you *today*. Pray and ask God for the boldness to share in your small group or with your coworker or family member.
- 4) "Don't focus on your doubt; focus on faith." The distraught father (in Mark 9:22-24) was open about his fear for his son, his desperation for help, and his doubt. He is not the only one in the Bible to be very vocal and authentic with Jesus. What main emotion did these people reveal to God and what was God's response?
- a. **Jeremiah 9:1-2, 23-24**
 - b. **Jonah 4**
 - c. **Acts 9:10-19**
- 5) Jesus talks about faith the size of a mustard seed in Luke 17:5-6. It is a short, stand-alone vignette with the disciples asking for more faith—and this is His only response. Do you agree with the statement, "*Your faith will grow as you go*"? What would be your next faith step? Is it baptism? Learning to pray with others? Writing down and actually preparing your story so that you can feel confident to share it when God gives you the opportunity? If you know your next step, are you willing to do it?

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How Does This Apply?

- 6) **Read Joshua 4:4-7.** If God has rescued you in the past, or answered your prayers, or revealed Himself at work in your life, do you keep track of these things? Have you told anyone else? What can you do to help bring these things to mind in your *next* time of trouble?

- 7) Answer the question: "What is my biggest fear about sharing my faith with others?"

Digging Deeper: Going Further on Your Own

- 8) The antidote for despair and depression is to take the focus off of you. Helping others helps us to heal in ways that are researched and medically documented. It's not surprising that the Bible already tells us this: eternal investments, seeing life change, and serving others is good for us! It's healing to our hearts and souls. Changing the focus from our trials and sadness gets us up and out into the world, where we can see God at work.
 - a. **John 12:26**

 - b. **Luke 10:1-17**