

July 13, 2003

Week Thirty-six: "Appraising our Faith"

Day One: Small Group Guide

Read: Nehemiah 4 (p. 525)

Read: Commentary (p. 526)

Reflect: What brings your discouragement? How do you fight against discouragement?

Dig: As you read through the chapter, what are the sources of discouragement?

See verses 3, 10, 11, 12.

What is the reason that Nehemiah gives for them to not be afraid? See verse 14.

How many days did it take to finish the wall? (see Nehemiah 6:16, p. 528). What happened to their enemies at that point?

Apply: Use this prayer from p. 1534 to begin your day today:

"Dear Heavenly Father, I come to you as your child. I put myself under your protective care and acknowledge that you are the only legitimate fear object in my life. I confess that I have been fearful and anxious because of my lack of trust and unbelief. I have not always lived by faith in you, and too often have relied on my own strength and resources. I thank you that I am forgiven in Christ.

"I choose to believe the truth that you have not given me a spirit of fear but of power, love and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7). Therefore I renounce any spirit of fear. I ask you to reveal to my mind all the fears that have been controlling me. Show me how I have become fearful and the lies I have believed. I desire to live a responsible life in the power of your Holy Spirit. Show me how these fears have kept me from doing that. I ask this so that I can confess, renounce and overcome every fear by faith in you. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Week Thirty-six: "Appraising our Faith"
Day Two: "Happiness"

Read: Ecclesiastes 11:7-10 (p. 742)

Read: Commentary (p. 742)

Reflect: Does the Bible encourage happiness? Are you usually happy? Is that important?

Dig: What is the reason that Solomon gives in verse 10 for not worrying? How does that stack up with other passages about worry?

See Matthew 6:25-34 (p. 1085)

See Philippians 4:4-7 (p. 1371)

Does God want us to be happy?

See Psalm 16:11 (p. 600)

See Psalm 37:4 (p. 616)

Apply: Ask God for a deeper delight in him so that your happiness will be long-lasting. See Psalm 16 as a guide to prayer.

Week Thirty-six: "Appraising our Faith"
Day Three: "Fun"

Read: 2 Samuel 6 (p. 339)

Read: Commentary (p. 339)

Reflect: What inhibitions keep you from having fun? Is "fun" a worthy goal in life?

Dig: What reason does David give for having such fun? See verse 21.

Based on that same verse, answer this question also: How does David get freedom from his inhibitions?

Look up 1 Corinthians 4:1-7 (p. 1307) to see how Paul handled other's judgments and opinions and even his own heart's condemnation.

Apply: Ask God for freedom from other's judgments and from people-pleasing.

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Day Four: "Security"

Read: Psalm 23 (p. 605)

Read: Commentary (p. 607)

Reflect: When has Psalm 23 been especially meaningful to you? When is it usually read? Why?

Dig: Look up these passages which also speak of God being our Shepherd and write down what they contribute to your understanding of Jesus as our security.

John 10:11-16 (p. 1214)

1 Peter 2:25 (p. 1453)

Philippians 4:19 (p. 1371)

The center of this Psalm is the line "...for you are with me." Why is that also the central thought in terms of our security?

Apply: Use this prayer from p. 1532 to deepen God's security in your life:

"Dear Heavenly Father, I come to you as your child, purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I declare my dependence upon you, and I acknowledge my need of you. I know that apart from Christ I can do nothing. You know the thoughts and intentions of my heart, and you know the situation I am in from the beginning to the end. I feel as though I am double-minded, and I need your peace to guard my heart and my mind. I humble myself before you and choose to trust you to exalt me at the proper time in any way you choose. I place my trust in you to supply all my needs according to your riches in glory and to guide me into all truth. I ask for your divine guidance so that I may fulfill my calling to live a responsible life by faith in the power of your Holy Spirit. Search me, O God, and know

my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. In Jesus name, Amen."

Week Thirty-six: "Appraising our Faith"
Day Five: "Peace"

Read: Isaiah 32:17 (p. 785)

Read: Commentary (p. 786)

Reflect: What brings you peace? Is peace increasing or decreasing in your life? Why?

Dig: What is the context of verse 17? Notice especially verses 9-14. What does this tell you about the kind of peace that verse 17 is describing?

Can you have peace without justice?

What does Philippians 4:4-7 (p. 1371) teach us about peace? What is our part and what is God's part in this passage?

Apply: Seek to put into practice what Philippians 4:4-7 tells you to do. Begin with all the things that you are grateful for; then place into God's hands all that you are concerned over. Finally, trust that God will guard your heart and mind.