

BIBLE STUDY

Finishing Strong!

REMINDING OURSELVES
WHAT GOD CAN DO



“Yes indeed, it won’t be long now.” God’s Decree. “Things are going to happen so fast your head will swim, one thing fast on the heels of the other. You won’t be able to keep up. Everything will be happening at once—and everywhere you look, blessings!
Amos 9:13 MSG

24-hours is too long for God to transform things around us. Oftentimes when things aren’t happening around us, He may be doing something inside us to equip us for what He has in store for us. The level of cooperation we give Him determines how quickly He can change what needs to be changed (within us or in our external circumstances).

As challenging as the year may have been, God hasn’t changed and His capacity hasn’t diminished in any way. This series we’re going to be reminding ourselves of who our God is, because when we know who we’re trusting we’re better able to believe what He says.

Now is not the time to give up hope, by the grace of God we will all finish the year strong.

Stay connected.



Day 1 Immunity

'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.' Isaiah 43:2

For many of us the past year feels like we have been through waters and fires, economically, socially, medically and in many other areas. Yet in the midst of it all the Lord has been with and seen us through. We are not exempted from facing challenges, but in Christ we are immune from being overwhelmed by them. Why go through all these issues? Why don't things just flow with ease?

'...For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.' James 1:2-4

There are some facets of life we can't wish away, but most go through because they are building up things in us and also removing certain things that need to go so that we at the end of the day we come out stronger. Strength isn't built in the place of ease...Some may ask, "how do I know if this challenge is an opportunity to strengthen me or an attack from the enemy?". It's very important to ask this question because the answer will determine how we respond to what we're facing. This is why James goes further in the next verse to tell us:

'If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.' James 1:5

When we're not sure what's going on, we need to ask God for wisdom on what the source of that specific situation is and how to address it, so we don't assume. We have the confident assurance that God will answer us and show us what to do. And most importantly, we also have the confidence of His unswerving loyalty. He will be with us through it all. Remember, He alone has the capacity to make all things work together for our good.

Reflect: What challenges have you been through this year and how has God shown up for you? If the challenges are still present, take some time to ask: Lord what is really going on and what should I do?



Day 2

Preservation in Famine

'But the Lord watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his unfailing love. He rescues them from death and keeps them alive in times of famine.' Psalms 33:18-19

That we're alive today speaks to God's preservation over us and also tells us that there is still an opportunity for us to partner with the Lord in expanding the frontiers of the kingdom of heaven. Beyond just keeping us alive, the Lord preserves us in times of famine. In today's terminology we would say that the Lord keeps us alive in times of recession.

'At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner... So Abram left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned. (Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.)' Genesis 12:10, 13:1-2

'A severe famine now struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived. The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you.... When Isaac planted his crops that year, he harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the Lord blessed him. He became a very rich man, and his wealth continued to grow.' Genesis 26:1-2;12-13

The Lord has promised to keep us in the times of famine (recession). Recession isn't new, there have been famines since biblical times and it's important to understand how the Lord would have us respond. Looking at the lives of Abraham and Isaac we see two different instructions, yet both led to positive outcomes. Abraham went to Egypt because of the famine and left Egypt prosperous.

When a famine happened again in Isaac's time, he thought to do the same thing, after all it worked for His father. However, God's instruction to Isaac was different – Stay where you are. Yet in both situations, the outcome was preservation and prosperity. What does this tell us – preservation and prosperity are in God and not the physical location, therefore listening to God and obeying His instructions are critical.

Reflect: How much of your plans are based on seeking and obeying God's instructions?

Day 3

Rivers of Oil

'When my steps were bathed with cream, And the rock poured out rivers of oil for me!' Job 29:6

In the scripture above, Job was reflecting on the memory of when he moved with so much ease, it seemed as though his steps were bathed in cream. More interestingly he also noted that the rock poured out rivers of oil for him. So, let's pause here – rocks are not known for pouring out oil and certainly not rivers of oil. Rocks speak of hard places, difficult situations that require a lot of effort to handle. While it may be possible for a rock sitting on a natural water source to gush out water when it's cracked open, it is incredibly unlikely that a rock will just start pouring out rivers of oil of its own volition.

'Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.' Isaiah 43:19

The God we serve is a master of overcoming impossible situations. If He can make a road in wilderness, rivers in the desert, getting a rock to pour out rivers of oil is a simple thing for Him. This speaks to creating tremendous opportunities in the most unlikely places. The Lord has more than a million ways to create an opportunity for you, and all the ways will demonstrate His glory.

'For with God nothing will be impossible.' Luke 1:37

It also means we need to be open to what God wants to do and not fixated on a specific outcome. No one would ordinarily go to a rock expecting rivers of oil to flow from it without having some form of prior insight that such a thing was possible. When we put our hope in God, seek Him and follow His instructions, we shouldn't also start 'advising' Him on how He should respond to our prayers/requests. Remember all we see is right now. He sees the end from the beginning and works towards His expected outcome when we let Him. Let's learn to stand aside and let God be God.

Reflect: Our God is an impossibility specialist. Let's trust Him to do what only He can do.



Day 4

Crown the Year

'You crown the year with Your goodness, and Your paths drip with abundance.' Psalms 65:11

The Bible tells us in Ecclesiastes 7 that better is the end of a thing than the beginning. Regardless of how the year may have started and what may have occurred, we have the confidence that the Lord is able to crown the year with His goodness and abundance in a way that only He can. He isn't bound by time or the circumstances and limitations of man so He is more than able to do what He intends.

'Elisha replied, "Listen to this message from the Lord! This is what the Lord says: By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, six quarts of choice flour will cost only one piece of silver, and twelve quarts of barley grain will cost only one piece of silver.'" 2 Kings 7:1

In the scripture above there had been a severe famine in Samaria, to the extent that things were astronomically expensive for a very long time. Yet, Elisha gave a word from the Lord declaring a dramatic turnaround within 24-hours. This looked impossible to everyone and a key government official even made a point of scoffing at the word. How could God possibly turn things around in just a few hours?

Some of us may be in a similar situation – the issue has been there for such a long time that we may have started doubting that God actually has the capacity to turn things around and even if He could, surely not within such a short time? But if we spend some time in the Bible, we will see many examples of dramatic things happening "suddenly" or "by this time tomorrow".

"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?" Jeremiah 32:27

'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.' Hebrews 13:8

Whatever examples we see in the Bible is available to us, they're signposts to the Lord's immeasurable power and ability to turn things around. If He did it then, as a believer we can expect that He is more than capable of doing it now.

Reflect: What is that situation that seems to defy all solution? Have you taken it to the One for whom nothing is too hard or are you still trying to figure things out yourself? Remember, He alone has the power to crown your year with His goodness and abundance



Day 5

Positioning for Success

'O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?' 2 Chronicles 20:6

Jehoshaphat faced a high-pressure situation – he was surrounded by enemies much more numerous and powerful than him. So in desperation he turned to God, not as a challenge, but rather fervently reminding himself of who God is.

'Put Me in remembrance....' Isaiah 43:26

'Then the Lord said to me, "You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word."' Jeremiah 1:12

God never forgets His word concerning any situation, He's assured us that He's always ready to perform it. We're the ones who need to be reminded of who God is and what He has said. God in His mercy understands our frailty and the fact that no matter how often He shows up for us and for others, we still need to remind ourselves of who He is and His track record.

'...For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.' 2 Chronicles 20:12

'You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you... Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you.'" 2 Chronicles 20:17

When Jehoshaphat found himself in the tight spot, calling out and fully surrendering to God gave the Lord the opportunity to step into the situation on His behalf. And the Lord did that and more. The strategy was unconventional, but Jehoshaphat trusted the Lord. Oftentimes God's ways may not make sense to us, but that doesn't make them any less powerful and effective.

Reflect: We are most powerful when we position our hearts and lives in total surrender to the Lord. His ways aren't our ways, but they're the most effective.



Day 6

Removing Limitations

'I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron.' Isaiah 45:2

Much as we would prefer for our lives to follow a straight path, there will be times when we make some decisions that make our path crooked. There may be some minor deviations from God's perfect plan for us, and there may be times when we totally go off track. Regardless of which it is, the Lord has the capacity to make things work together for our good. Have you gone 'off plan' at some point this year and how do you ensure that doesn't happen again next year?

'For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding' Colossians 1:9

It's possible for us to have access into what God has planned for us concerning the coming year. His word tells us that we can be filled with the knowledge of His will, so our responsibility is to pay the price in the place of prayer and fasting to get direction from the Lord. When we know what He has planned for us, it will be clear when an opportunity is in line with His plan for us or not.

When we are in God's plan, there may be challenges the enemy may throw our way to act as speed bumps. We have the assurance that God is not only able to take care of this potential crookedness whenever it may show up, He is also more than able to deal with any opposition that may come our way.

"... I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron.' Isaiah 45:2

'So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.' John 8:36

Gates represent access points, and it's possible that there may be some access points the enemy has denied you entry into this year. The Lord says He not only has the power to open these gates, He will break them in pieces so they no longer exist. Perhaps you may feel at times that you're in a place of confinement – can't seem to move forward, as though you're behind bars. The Lord says He will also cut the bars of iron. This means no matter how limiting or confining your situation may appear, the Lord will cut through those bars – be they mental or physical. Jesus paid the price for your freedom, so you have the right to demand a life free from crookedness and limitations of any sort.

Reflect: In Jesus we have liberty, freedom from any form of confinement or limitation and the assurance that we have in Him the ability to walk in a straightforward manner.



Day 7 Knowing What to Do

'200 leaders from Issachar, along with troops under their command—these leaders knew the right time to do what needed to be done' 1 Chronicles 12:32 CEV

The sons of Issachar stood out among the tribe of Israel for three critical reasons – they understood what was going on, they knew what to do and the best time to do it. There may be times when we are in the dark about what is going on, and then there may also be times when we know what is going on, but we don't know what to do about it. Finally, it's possible to have insight into what is going on and what to do, but not know when the best time to do it is. The sons of Issachar show us that it's possible to have access to all three so we function with precision and accuracy in the coming year.

'You made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to set.' Psalms 104:19

Our Lord is extremely precise in character and we see this in nature – the sun, moon and elements all function according to laid down laws which He spoke at the onset of creation. If He can be so precise regarding elements, how much more we who Jesus paid a heavy price to redeem?

'Then I said, "Look, I have come. As is written about me in the Scriptures' Psalms 40:7

It's important we realize that the Lord already has the coming year mapped out for us – daily, weekly, monthly. There are things we are to do and set times for us to do it, so we need to actively partner with the Lord to ensure that we are at the center of His will for our lives. How do we do this? The first step is to ask – Lord what would you have me do? How would you have me do it? When would you have me do it? We will shortchange ourselves if we stumble into the coming year hoping that things will work out, when we have the opportunity to proactively align the year to follow God's plan.

Reflect: Are you waiting to see what the coming year will bring, or are you partnering with the Holy Spirit to receive revelation of what is to come and calling it forth in the place of prayer?

Day 8 Building to Pattern

“Noah did everything just as God commanded him.” Genesis 6:22 NIV

The Lord gave Noah a specific instruction to build a huge boat approximately 450 feet long, 45 feet high. This was a very public assignment that would have been a great task for him, consuming a lot of time and resources. It could not have been easy for Noah during that preparation period, gathering the necessary materials and being dedicated to the difficult task. Very likely he would also have had to explain to people why he may not have been available to socialize or engage in things his friends were because he was committed to this project. A project very few people would have understood.

“When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away...’ Matthew 24:37-39

As Noah was building the vessel many would have wondered what he was doing and why. He may have been scoffed at, after all people were out enjoying themselves while he and his family were preparing for the flood he had been talking about for a very long time. He must have encountered a lot discouragement and naysayers, but he endured and followed God’s plan. The Lord’s instructions to us for 2021 may appear contrary to popular opinion, but we have to ask for the grace to endure and build according to what He has shown or is showing us. That’s where our safety lies.

‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.’ Jeremiah 29:11-13

It may not look like it in the beginning, but God’s plan is always what’s best for us. He’s on our side constantly working things out for our good as we pray and seek Him wholeheartedly.

Reflect: Like Noah, we can also build with accuracy, consistency and be unshakeable because God has shown us the pattern. What template has God given you for the coming year?

Day 9 Constant Preservation

'I lay down and slept, yet I woke up in safety, for the Lord was watching over me. I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies who surround me on every side.' Psalms 3:5-6

Waking up this morning is purely by the grace of God, we didn't do anything to earn it. By His grace the Lord kept us through the night and gave us the gift of a new day. As He kept us through the last months of the year is the way we can trust Him to keep us through the coming days, regardless of what may be going on around us.

'But You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head.' Psalms 3:3

The Lord is our shield of protection, who keeps us through the various storms of life. As the darts of life are thrown at us – fear, depression, anxiety and more – He shields us from them all. He is also our glory, the source of our light and everything good in our lives. He is the one who guides and teaches us how to go through life in a manner that will be beneficial to us, leading us along the best pathway of our lives. He is the One who lifts up our head when we feel we are down and out. With the Lord He never leaves us as we are, he continues to shape and perfect us, conforming us to the model He has for us which is Christ.

'...“Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, and said, “Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.' 2 Kings 6:16-17

With this in our hearts, we can face the coming days with boldness and the assurance that even if what we face appears to be like ten thousand enemies, there are many more for us than against us. Our prayer then should be that the Lord should open our eyes and keep our eyes fixed on Him alone. That's where our success lies. And as He preserves, protects and promotes us the glory goes to Him alone.

Reflect: Let's commit our lives into God's hands daily as He alone has the power to keep us.



Day 10 Crossing Over

'Since you have never traveled this way before, they will guide you. Stay about half a mile behind them, keeping a clear distance between you and the Ark...' Joshua 3:4

Much is said about crossing over into the new year. Many who haven't connected with the Lord throughout the year do their best to be found in a house of worship on the last day of the year so they can 'cross over' into the new year in prayer. But I believe we have realized that what makes the difference in a new year isn't simply the change of date, but the changes we make. When the Israelites were crossing over into the new territory, the Lord gave them strict instructions: keep your eyes on the Ark because you haven't been this way before. Under the new covenant we no longer need the physical ark, but we do need the Holy Spirit to guide us and He has promised to do so much in and with us as we give Him room to move.

'Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go.' Isaiah 48:17

How do you know how to navigate a path you've not crossed before? The best way would be to find someone who already knows the way to lead you and that's what the Holy Spirit does for us. To profit essentially means to make gain, or to benefit. As the Holy Spirit leads us, he knows the best actions for us to take that will enable us to reap maximum benefits from our efforts.

'Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!' Mark 4:8

From the Lord's perspective, He looks forward to helping us make gains in multiples – 30, 60, 100-fold – in every area. Clearly this cannot happen in our own strength alone. When we soak ourselves in God's presence and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us then we are positioned to partake of His unlimited power which brings increase in the areas necessary for our growth.

Reflect: As the Lord guides and directs our steps, He leads us on the right pathway to bring out the best in and for us.

Day 11

Blessing from Obedience

'If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully keep all his commands that I am giving you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the world.'
Deuteronomy 28:1

We have said that 24-hours is too long for God to do something dramatic in our lives, but we shouldn't forget the fact that we also have a role to play. What does the Lord require of us? Oftentimes it's simply our full obedience. Emphasis on full... There are times when we may follow instructions half-way or may delay obeying and think that it's okay – it really isn't. From the Lord's perspective, partial obedience is the same as disobedience.

'Now go and completely destroy the entire Amalekite nation... Saul and his men spared Agag's life and kept the best of the sheep and goats, the cattle, the fat calves, and the lambs—everything, in fact, that appealed to them. They destroyed only what was worthless or of poor quality.' 1 Samuel 15:3,9

The Lord gave Saul clear and specific instructions, yet because he chose the parts he wanted to obey, God saw it as disobedience. Very likely we all have been guilty of partial obedience at some point. But let's not be like Saul and try and justify what we may have done. Rather let's come in full repentance before the Lord and ask for mercy and the grace to obey.

'Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.' Psalms 51:10

When we come in full repentance (meaning we actually turn away from what we did rather than just say 'sorry') we open ourselves up to receive God's mercy and grace to obey. We need the Lord's help to walk with Him in obedience, which is why David asked for a clean heart and a loyal spirit. There will be things we will have to deny ourselves of and walk away from in order to obey God. It may not be easy, but as the Holy Spirit continues to help us, we will reap the multitude of amazing benefits that obedience brings.

Reflect: When we think of obedience, we tend to focus on what we feel we're losing, rather than what we stand to gain. Please take some time to go through Deuteronomy 28:1-13 for a bit of what is available to us as we obey.

Thank you for completing the study. We'll love to hear from you, so please connect with us on:

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