

Small Group & Personal Study: 24/7 Discipleship Series – Our Daily Struggle

This week we are going to look at how the Christian is called to daily overcome temptation and live a life of obedience that pleases God.

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Daily Reading: This week we are reading the complete story of Joseph's life and how he remained obedient to God and how God remained faithful to him. We also have readings to help us focus on how to win our daily struggles.

Day 1 – Genesis 37 & 1 Peter 5:8-9

Day 2 – Genesis 39 & 1 Corinthians 10:13

Day 3 – Genesis 40 – 41 & 1 John 4:4

Day 4 – Genesis 42 - 43 & 1 John 5:1-5

Day 5 – Genesis 44 – 45 & 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Day 6 – Genesis 46 – 48 & Ephesians 6:11-18

Day 7 – Genesis 49 – 50 & Ephesians 3:20-21

Lesson: Overcoming Daily Struggle

Review the story of Joseph as found in Genesis 37 – 50 and then together read Genesis chapters 37 & 39.

1. What kind of struggles did Joseph face in his life?

Just to list a few; Joseph was hated by his own brothers. Joseph was stripped of his robe and thrown into a cistern. Then he was sold into slavery. He was constantly tempted to sin by Potiphar's wife. Joseph was a victim of lies and slander about things he never even did. And then he was put into prison on false claims. I can imagine Joseph was a proud young man the way his father treated him so to have such things thrown into his face had to be difficult to handle. And as a young man, having women throw herself at him had to be difficult to resist. And none of us ever like to be accused of things we are not guilty of so that had to push him to the edge.

2. How did Joseph handle the struggles that confronted him?

What is amazing about this story is that in every situation Joseph remained connected to God and kept his obedience to God as his top priority. When Joseph was betrayed by his brothers he could have easily become angry, bitter, revengeful, but what we see in Genesis 50:19-20 is that Joseph did not hold a grudge against his brothers but instead allowed God to be glorified through his obedience and submission to God's plan.

When Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him, he remembered the Lord (Genesis 39:9) and he did just what we are told to do in 1 Peter 5:8-9 and 1 Corinthians 10:13. He resisted the devil and he found the way out that our Faithful Father provided. Even when Joseph was falsely put into prison he remained connected to God and was blessed by God so he flourished rather than basking in his sorrows.

3. What does this tell you about how to handle your daily struggles?

We must first and foremost remain in Christ. John 5:15. We must desire to love and obey God. 1 John 5:1-5. Overcoming my daily struggles requires that I remain in Christ and love Him deeply with a heart that desires to obey.

4. What daily struggles make you vulnerable? What temptations do you need to be aware of and alert to each moment by moment?

Allow people to open up and share as they are willing.

5. Read Ephesians 3:20-21. How does this verse help you in understanding how to overcome your daily struggles?

Knowing that God does immeasurably more than I ask or imagine through His power at work within me I know I can overcome daily struggles and bring Him glory through my life just as He was honored in the life of Joseph. I understand that as I remain in Christ and He remains in me I can do all things. He has given me the mind of Christ and I can see struggles and overcome temptation to sin if I remain in His power.

The Discipline of Daily Repentance and Obedience

The Bible says in Proverbs 28:13 *"People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy."* (NLT)

Daily repentance and obedience is essential to abiding in Christ. If I sin and refuse to confess and turn from my sin a broken relationship with God is the result. God doesn't quit loving me. I don't lose my salvation. But I do put a barrier between Him and I. That barrier of sin builds up and prevents me from allowing God's transforming power to work in my life.

As a Disciple I am taught to daily confess and turn from my sin. 1 John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* We call that repentance. Repentance requires that I hate the sin so much that I desire for God to completely remove it from my life. That's right I hate the sin. If sin is a pleasure then I must pray for God to change my heart. If I refuse to call sin a sin then I must ask God to reveal truth to me. Much like King David confessed in Psalm 51:10, *"Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me"* we must ask God to make us new by revealing and removing everything that is not pleasing to Him.

Obedience is doing what God tells me to do. We live in a time and place where the obedient Christian life is ignored. Many Christians act as though living a lukewarm Christian life is all God really could ever expect. We have every excuse in the world for not living in obedience to God's Word and calling in our life. Someone once said that delayed obedience is disobedience. In the same way that sin creates a barrier between us and God, so disobedience creates a barrier between us and God. What is God saying to you about your life of obedience towards Him and His word?

Here is a thought, before a sin is an act, it is a thought. Can I simply begin to walk in obedience by the renewing my mind daily? Romans 12:1-2 says, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

The discipline of daily repentance and obedience means that each day I acknowledge my sin, I ask God to forgive my sin, I remember and trust in His promise to forgive and restore and I ask God for strength to remain holy as He is holy.

I want to share a special message with you about love and obedience to God that I read recently. This quote is from a Jesuit Priest and is a powerful statement of God's love with you and how to overcome the daily struggles of sin and life.

“The only way to survive is to know that God loves me as I am and not as I should be, that He loves me beyond worthiness and unworthiness, beyond fidelity and infidelity; that He loves me in the morning sun and in the evening rain, without caution, regret, boundary, limit, or breaking point; that no matter what I do, He can't stop loving me. When I am really in conscious communion with the reality of wild, passionate, relentless, stubborn, pursuing, tender love of Christ for me, then it's not that I have to, or I've got to, or I must, or I should, or I ought: suddenly I want to change because I know how deeply I'm loved.

I have a good little friend, a 55 year-old nun name Mary Michael O'Shaughnessy, who has a doctorate in theology. She has a banner on her wall that says, “Today I will not should on myself”. One of the wonderful results of my consciousness of God's staggering love for me as I am, is a freedom not to be who I should be or who others want me to be. I can be who I really am. And who I am is a bundle of paradoxes and contradictions: I believe and I doubt, I trust and I get discouraged, I love and I hate, I feel bad about feeling good, I feel guilty if I don't feel guilty. Aristotle said we are rational animals. I say I am an angel with an incredible capacity for beer. It is the real me that God loves. I don't have to be anyone else. For twenty years I tried to be Brother Teresa. I tried to be Francis of Assisi. I had to be a carbon copy of a great saint rather than the original God intended me to be. A black evangelical preacher from Georgia once said, “Be who you is, because if you ain't who you is, you is who you ain't”.

The biggest mistake I can make is to say to God, ‘Lord, if I change, you will love me, won't you?’ The Lord's reply is always, ‘Wait a minute, you've got it all wrong. You don't have to change so I'll love you; I love you so you'll change.’ I simply expose myself to the love that is everything and have an immense, unshakable, reckless, raging confidence that God loves me so much He'll change me and fashion me into the child that He always wanted me to be.”