

Small Group Guide

"God's Response Is Faithfulness" -- Based on Psalm 34 and 1 Samuel 21:10-15

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Invite someone to read Psalm 34 aloud to the group. Encourage members to listen for a word, phrase, or line that stands out to them personally. Begin your time together by having each person briefly share what caught their attention and why.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This session explores Psalm 34 alongside its surprising backstory found in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. David, the famous warrior-king chosen and anointed by God, finds himself in a desperate situation -- hiding from King Saul and stumbling into enemy territory. When his cover is blown before King Achish of Gath, David panics and pretends to be insane to escape. The psalm that emerges from this episode is not a psalm of shame or defeat, but one of exuberant, grateful praise. The contrast between David's shaky faith in the moment and God's unwavering faithfulness in response is at the heart of what this passage has to teach us.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- David, despite his history of extraordinary faith, experienced a moment of serious doubt and responded in a way that revealed how little he trusted God in that particular situation.
 - God's response to David's lack of trust was not condemnation or abandonment -- it was faithfulness and deliverance.
 - Psalm 34 is not a celebration of David's cleverness. It is a celebration of God's goodness in spite of David's failure to trust him.
 - The pattern of God responding to human faithlessness with faithfulness is consistent throughout Scripture, and finds its ultimate expression in Jesus Christ.
 - Looking back on moments where our trust in God has been shaky can lead us not to shame, but to deeper gratitude and praise when we see how God showed up anyway.
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening -- Getting Into the Text

1. Before this sermon, were you familiar with Psalm 34? If so, did you know the story behind it? How does knowing the backstory change the way you read the psalm?
2. The sermon described the situation in 1 Samuel 21 as morally ambiguous -- it is not entirely clear whether David was right or wrong to do what he did. Where do you land on that? Do you think David handled the situation well, or do you think he dropped the ball? What makes it difficult to say for certain?
3. Pastor Graeme's sermon pointed out that the David in this story -- afraid, reactive, and resorting to deception -- is the same David who killed Goliath and wrote psalms about God's faithfulness. What do you make of that contrast? Does it surprise you, or does it feel familiar?

Going Deeper -- Personal Reflection

4. The sermon asked: "Who among us hasn't had a moment where we've been in a tight spot and we didn't respond the way that we wanted to?" Can you think of a time in your own life when a difficult situation revealed that your trust in God was shakier than you thought? What did that look like for you?
5. The sermon described a quiet moment by the fire where David may have reflected on what happened and turned back toward God in gratitude. Have you ever had a moment like that -- where, looking back on a difficult season, you could see God's faithfulness even though you had not been trusting him well in the middle of it? What did that realization feel like?
6. The sermon referenced 2 Timothy 2:13, which affirms that even when we are faithless, God remains faithful because he cannot deny himself. How does that truth sit with you today? Is it easy or difficult to believe? What makes it hard to receive sometimes?

Connecting to Jesus

7. Pastor Graeme posed the question: what would Jesus have done in David's situation? And then answered it by pointing to the cross -- that Jesus responded to the moral failure and shaky faith of all humanity not by turning away, but by suffering faithfully on our behalf. How does that picture of Jesus shape the way you think about your own moments of doubt or failure?
8. The sermon said that when we look to God, we are not put to shame -- even though it feels like we should be. Why do you think it feels counterintuitive to look to God in moments when we feel like we have let him down? What would it look like to practice looking to him anyway?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

This Week, Consider the Following

- Set aside time to read Psalm 34 slowly and on your own. As you read, try to identify one or two verses that speak directly to something you are currently walking through. Write them down somewhere you will see them regularly.
- Think of one situation in your life right now where your actions or responses may be revealing a lack of trust in God -- whether in a relationship, a decision, a fear, or a habit. Bring that situation honestly before God in prayer this week and ask him to remind you of his faithfulness.
- Reflect on a past moment when God showed up for you even when your faith was weak. Consider writing it down or sharing it with someone in your group or in your life. Gratitude shared becomes a source of encouragement for others.
- If you are in a season of genuine struggle with trust, consider reaching out to a trusted friend, mentor, or pastor this week. You do not have to process it alone.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your group time by praying together. You may want to use the following as a guide, or pray in your own words:

Father, thank you for the honesty of Scripture -- that it shows us heroes of the faith in their moments of failure as much as their moments of triumph. Thank you that David's story does not end in shame, and that ours does not have to either. Where our trust in you has been shaky, remind us of your faithfulness. Where we have run ahead of you or forgotten you in the middle of a hard moment, draw us back. Help us to look to you and not be ashamed. We are grateful that your response to our faithlessness is not condemnation but faithfulness, and that Jesus made that response complete and final on the cross. May that truth lift our heads this week. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.