

Small Group Guide

"A Long Obedience in the Same Direction" — Psalm 124

Overview

This week's sermon drew from Psalm 124, one of the ancient Songs of Ascent sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. The central message is one of remembrance: when the road of faith gets hard, we are called to look back and recognize how God has carried us through. The Christian life is described honestly as hazardous work — but God is faithful, and He is on our side.

Key Takeaways

- The Christian life is a long obedience in the same direction. There is no finish line this side of eternity where we have it all figured out.
 - Faith is not merely a feeling or a belief — it is loyalty and trust expressed through how we live.
 - Following Jesus does not mean life will be easy. Hardship is where faith is actually forged and strengthened.
 - The psalmist does not say God kept him from trouble. He says God brought him through trouble. That is a critical distinction.
 - Remembering what God has done in the past is one of the most powerful tools we have for sustaining faith in the present.
 - Our lives are defined by Christ, not by our circumstances, our successes, or our suffering.
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Icebreaker

Go around the group and share one song that has meant a lot to you during a difficult season of life. What made it meaningful?

Discussion Questions

Opening the Text

1. Read Psalm 124 together as a group. What words or phrases stand out to you most? What do you notice about the tone and language the psalmist uses?
2. The psalmist uses vivid, even violent imagery — floods, raging waters, teeth, snares. Why do you think he chose such dramatic language? What does that tell us about what he actually went through?

Exploring the Theme of Hazard

3. The sermon described the Christian life as "hazardous work." Does that description surprise you, or does it ring true to your experience? How have you experienced the cost of following Jesus?
4. The sermon stated that faith grows in the most difficult aspects of our experience, not the easiest. Do you agree with that? Can you think of a time in your own life when your faith grew specifically because of a hard season?
5. The sermon listed several things that following Jesus does not guarantee — good health, a trouble-free marriage, financial security, protection from grief or betrayal. How does that honesty about the Christian life either challenge or encourage you?

Exploring the Theme of Remembrance

6. The sermon emphasized the importance of looking back and remembering what God has done. Why do you think remembering is so easy to neglect, especially when we are in the middle of a hard season?
7. The writer of Hebrews 11 rehearses a long list of people who acted "by faith" — Abraham, Moses, Noah, Sarah, and many others. What do those stories have in common? What do they tell us about what it actually looks like to trust God?
8. Think about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, or Daniel continuing to pray even under threat of death. What would it look like in your own daily life to have that level of loyalty to God? What would it cost you?

Personal Reflection

9. The sermon asked the question: "Where would you be if the Lord had not been on your side?" Take a moment and think about that honestly. Is there a specific season or circumstance in your life where, looking back, you can see that God carried you through something you could not have survived on your own?

10. The sermon described faith as "belief with legs on it" — loyalty and trust expressed through action. In your current season of life, what does it look like practically to be loyal to Jesus? Where is trust in Jesus costing you something right now?
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Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to practice individually or as a group this week:

- 1. Write a "Remembrance List"** Set aside time this week to write down specific moments in your life when God came through for you. These do not have to be dramatic. They can be quiet moments of provision, peace, or unexpected help. Keep the list somewhere visible. Return to it the next time you feel overwhelmed.
 - 2. Read Hebrews 11** The sermon recommended reading Hebrews 11 on your own. Read it slowly and notice every time the phrase "by faith" appears. For each person mentioned, consider what they had to risk or sacrifice in order to be faithful. Ask yourself: what is God calling me to do "by faith" right now?
 - 3. Pray with Honesty** This week, practice praying honestly about whatever is hard in your life right now. Do not dress it up. Tell God exactly what you are afraid of or struggling with. Then, after you have been honest, intentionally recall one specific way God has been faithful to you in the past. Let that remembrance anchor your prayer.
 - 4. Share Your Story** Identify someone in your life — a friend, a family member, someone newer in their faith — and share with them a specific story of how God brought you through a hard time. Remembrance is not only personal. It is also one of the most powerful forms of witness and encouragement we can offer to one another.
 - 5. Examine Your Loyalties** The sermon described faith as loyalty — serving Jesus alone, not ourselves or other competing priorities. Spend some time this week asking yourself honestly: where are my loyalties divided right now? What am I serving alongside Jesus, or instead of Jesus? Bring that before God in prayer.
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Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying Psalm 124 back to God in your own words. Go around the group and let each person finish this sentence out loud:

"Lord, if you had not been on my side when _____, I would not have made it. Thank you."

End with a moment of silence, and then close with a simple prayer of trust for whatever each person is currently walking through.

