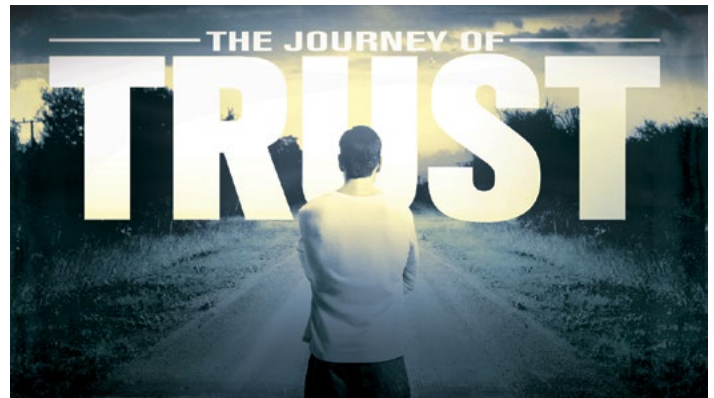


BEYOND THE WEEKEND

For the sermon on April 27-28, 2013
"Trusting in the Middle of a Mess"



Welcome to *Beyond the Weekend*! The experiences below are designed to connect with the weekend message and fit a variety of learning styles. They provide additional readings from other sections of Scripture such as the Old Testament, Psalms, Gospels, and Epistles (letters). Take 20-30 minutes each day and enjoy your pursuit of God!



Prefer e-mail? *Beyond the Weekend* is also available via daily e-mails, which include links to the Scripture (both written and audio), the sermon video, and a weekly blog post. To sign up for the daily e-mails, go to adabible.org/btw.

Day 1 Genesis 39 | Receiving God's Favor

Even as Joseph experienced what we can only describe as a "mess"—hatred by his brothers, sold into slavery, taken to a foreign land, falsely accused, and imprisoned—"the Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39.2, 3, 21, 23). God showed favor to him (special regard, goodwill, kindness) and "gave him success in everything he did" (Genesis 39.3). Along with Joseph, we see many others in Scripture who were "favored" by God, such as Samuel, Mary, and even Jesus (1 Samuel 2.26; Luke 1.28; 2.52).

Scripture is clear that receiving God's favor is tied to obedience: Joseph as he was tempted; Mary as she carried God's Son; and Jesus who was obedient to his earthly parents and his heavenly Father. This is what the psalmist declares in Psalm 106, "Blessed are those who act justly, who always do what is right. Remember me, Lord, when you show favor to your people" (vs. 3-4).

While seeking God's favor is not some sort of secret formula for getting what we want, we do seek his favor by living faithfully to his Word. Today, begin your week by praying for God's favor and asking him to reveal a part of your life that needs more obedience. Jot down the areas that come to mind, and refer back to them to remind yourself who's favor you are seeking (not other people's but God's).

Day 2 Psalm 130 | Waiting on the Lord

For followers of Jesus, trusting involves waiting. This is no surprise to the parent who spends a long night at the bedside of an ill child; the employee who survives the first two staff reductions but hears of a third; the unemployed mother of three headed to her tenth job interview; and the daughter whose mom suffers from dementia. The parent waits for healing, the employee waits for good news, the mother waits for a job, and the daughter waits for mercy.

But what if real waiting, true waiting, is not waiting for **something**, but rather waiting for **someone**? That is what we read in Psalm 130. The psalmist experiences complete despair: "Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord" (v. 1). In this despair, the psalmist waits: "I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits...I wait for the Lord more than the watchmen wait for the morning" (vs. 5-6).

While he was certainly wanting God to do **something**, it's important to notice he was waiting most for God himself: the safety, peace, and love that only God's presence gives. Today, as you wait for help in your pain or struggle, do a simple exercise. Spend ten minutes in complete silence with no agenda but to wait for the Lord. Do it as an act of submission to the God who has everything under control. Focus your thoughts by meditating on Psalm 130.

Day 3 Isaiah 55 | Trust in Our Waiting

Whether it's in line at the bank, on hold with our credit card company, or for an upcoming vacation, waiting is never enjoyable. But an essential element in trusting God is waiting. We wait because we trust him, and we trust him because he is in control. We're reminded of this in Isaiah 55, which expresses ultimate trust in God who is gracious, merciful, and mysterious. "For my [God's] thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" (v. 8).

God works in ways we do not understand. When he works, he provides more than we ever could have gained on our own (see vs. 1-3). The basis for our trust in waiting is that God is both **sovereign** (in control over all things) and **provident** (actively intervening in our world). We can confidently wait as he works his perfect will. Today, listen to "Still" by Hillsong (search youtube.com). Allow Isaiah's words, and the song's lyrics, to guide your time of prayer.

Day 4 Acts 7 | Right, but Still Suffering

The Bible tells the story of Joseph, recording his exemplary life: obedient to his father (Genesis 37.12-13), faithful to his employer (Genesis 39.2-6), compassionate to other prisoners (Genesis 40), and wise as a government official (Genesis 41). **Joseph did everything right but still suffered abduction, slavery, and wrongful imprisonment.** This theme is repeated in Acts 7 as Stephen, an early church leader, teacher, and debater—a man filled with the Holy Spirit—is stoned to death.

Understanding that suffering may result even when we do good is a key to trusting God. While God is concerned about what happens **to** us, he is more concerned about what happens **in** us (1 Samuel 16.7). In other words, he may sacrifice our comfort at times in order to transform us. If we know that going in, we can trust him through it. Today, commit again to doing the right thing, even if you might suffer. Know that your trust in God will grow and lead to a greater, deeper joy.

Day 5 John 14 | Peace in Trusting

Through all he experienced, Joseph never lost faith in God. At the end of it all, he told his brothers "...it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you... it was not you who sent me here, but God" (Genesis 45.5, 8). Joseph's faith enabled him to rest in God's peace, and it was this peace that Jesus spoke of just prior to his crucifixion. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14.27).

God's peace is different from the world's peace. Compare and contrast the two by making two columns on a piece of paper and labeling them "God's Peace" and "World's Peace." List the characteristics of each such as "Permanent" versus "Temporary" and "Trustworthy" versus "Uncertain." Then, consider where you put your greatest effort in life—God's peace or the world's peace? What can you do to pursue God's peace in greater ways?

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Questions or Comments | Contact Tim Nelson, pastor of spiritual formation at tnelson@adabile.org.

BTW Blog

Ada Bible Church staff and leaders share how God is meeting them through the sermons. BTW blog posts are hosted on Sabea, our blog for spiritual formation, and go live on Wednesdays.

This week we hear from Emma Bradford, web coordinator.

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