

CALGARY MISSION TRIP – 2019

INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for being willing to give your time, energy and money to go and serve the people of Calgary! We know that God is going to richly bless your work this week and we look forward to hearing the stories of lives that have been touched.

The purpose of this Bible study is for you to allow God to pour into you each day so that you have a full cup from which you are able to pour into the children and their parents. Then at the end of the day, it provides the opportunity for you and your team members to discuss God's Word and ask God to work through each of you as you unite in the common purpose of sharing God's love with the people of Calgary. When Tommy and I went on our first trip to Calgary in 2013 with Corinth Baptist Church, I found it to be the most spiritually rewarding mission trip I'd ever taken. I realized it was because we didn't just get up running every day; we took time individually to allow God to pour into us His truths and His love and grace so that we were prepared to share Him and His love and grace with the children and their parents. Then at the end of the day, we discussed the Bible study together as a team and there was such a sweetness about opening and discussing God's Word with those we'd served alongside that day. It helped to build unity of the team and also helped us get to know each other better. We pray that you experience the same spiritually rich time as you study, pray, and serve this week.

The theme of the Bible lessons for this year is what Jesus offers us when we have a relationship with Him. We decided to correlate your Bible studies with the children's lessons so you will have already studied the topic when you get to camp each day and you can help the children in your group to apply it to their lives regardless of what station you are working in. Below are the topics for each day:

Monday	Jesus Cares About Me – The story of the lost sheep
Tuesday	Jesus Gives Me Hope – The resurrection of Lazarus
Wednesday	Jesus Helps Me Believe – The story of Thomas
Thursday	Jesus Loves Me – John's passages of Jesus' love
Friday	Jesus Gives Me Joy – Paul and Silas in Prison

As I thought about these topics and how we will serve God this week by serving these precious children, I was reminded of a movie that our Sunday school class at First Baptist Church, Hilton Head Island, watched recently. It was called *The Bema: The Judgment Seat of Christ*. If you have not seen this movie, you should definitely find it and watch it. If you have a membership with RightNow Media, you can see it on that. (RightNow Media is like a Christian version of Netflix.) Anyway, it's a portrayal of what the Judgment Seat could look like and it will lead you to evaluate everything you do in light of God's will and your motivation. We know from Scripture that we will only receive rewards in heaven for what we do that was God's will and out of a heart of love for Him. This mission trip is an example of something that you will receive a reward for one day in heaven if you have done it out of love for Jesus and a desire to serve Him.

Therefore, it would be good to begin this trip with a self-evaluation of why you are going to Calgary and what you hope to accomplish. Think back to what prompted you to go to Calgary. Maybe a friend encouraged you or maybe you just felt led to go when it was mentioned at your church. God can use many ways to lead us to do certain tasks. The main thing is that you know that God has enabled you to go

and anything that God calls us to do, He gives us the power to do it. Summarize your decision to go on this mission trip and what you hope to accomplish.

Stop and ask God to help you accomplish whatever it is that He wants you to accomplish this week.

Below is our theme verse for the week:

“His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.” 2 Peter 1:3

What does this verse tell us about the source of the God’s divine power?

So if God has given us everything we need to live godly lives through the knowledge of Jesus Christ who has called us, there’s no reason for us to think we can’t do anything He calls us to do. It is through His power that He accomplishes His will through us. In the Bema movie mentioned earlier, one actor made the statement that at the Judgment Seat of Christ, Jesus will reward us for doing the work that He actually did through us. Think about that. He empowers us to serve and then He gives us rewards for serving. How do you see yourself serving the children this week?

Since you see that God has given you everything you need, what Godly characteristics do you think you will need to serve these children in a way that magnifies and glorifies God?

What are some traits that you think you will need to work cooperatively and encouragingly with your teammates?

Re-read the theme verse and spend some time asking God to fill you with His power and all that you need to represent Him well this week, to magnify Him so that He is seen more clearly and glorify Him so that those you serve know that Jesus is the reason you are there.

MONDAY
JESUS CARES ABOUT ME

Theme verse for the week: ***“His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.”*** 2 Peter 1:3

Today’s passage:

“¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’ ³So he told them this parable: ⁴‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.’” Luke 15:1-7

Jesus spent so much of His time and effort during His earthly ministry teaching the disciples the heart of God and drawing sinners to Himself. The common thread throughout His teachings was how very much God loves people and so greatly desires that we choose to love and serve Him and to experience the abundant life that He offers. The above passage is one example of this teaching. Although He faced constant criticism from the Scribes and Pharisees, He never lost His focus. As we see in the above passage, the criticism was that He ate with sinners. Jesus, however, used that criticism to make the point that He not only ate with sinners, He actually pursued them! And then He and all of Heaven celebrate when a sinner comes to Him!

Jesus obviously wanted the Pharisees and Scribes to understand that these sinners they looked down on were actually very important to Him; He cared that they were lost and His desire was to find them and bring them to Himself. Notice His emphasis on the shepherd’s diligence in finding the one lost sheep. The shepherd went after it, meaning that God pursues us when we stray away from Him and get off the path He has for us. Then when the shepherd found the lost sheep, he **joyfully** put it on his shoulders and carried it back to the flock, then called his friends and neighbors asking them to rejoice with him. When we stray away from God or when we are discouraged, He lifts us up and carries us in the same way the shepherd carried the sheep—joyfully. To borrow a line from Scripture, in this God demonstrates His love for us.

Think for a few moments about what Jesus has done for you. If you’re His child, He has redeemed you to eternity in Heaven. Remember when you realized that you were a sinner and Jesus drew you to Himself, and you put your faith in Him, accepting Him as your Savior. You were like the lost sheep that Jesus went looking for and when He found you, He, in a sense, picked you up, put you on His shoulders and brought you into the fold. The fold is where you find His security and protection. It is the place where you have a quality of life on earth that is full of protection, joy, peace, guidance and fulfillment.

Have there been times when you left the fold to wander out on your own, having left His protection and security? You can rest assured that in those times, Jesus was there to seek you and urge you to come home to His safety and comfort. He forgives us when we stray and He and all of Heaven celebrate when we repent and return to the safety of the fold.

What is the fold? It is the place where we are in the center of God's will and are trusting Him, serving Him, doing whatever it is that He calls us to do. It is where we can experience the abundant life that He offers. As the above passage demonstrates, Jesus cares enough about us to want us in the safety of the fold and He will go to great lengths to seek us when we stray.

Describe the feeling you have when you're in the center of God's will versus the feeling you've had when you veered out of the center of His will. None of us are perfect; we've all had times when we allowed our flesh to rule and lead us astray. Contrast the quality of life of these times.

First John 1:7 says this: *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."* The light represents the fold where we have Jesus, the light of the world. When we leave the fold, we walk into darkness. However, when we return to the light, to Jesus, His blood cleanses us from our sin.

This is the lesson that the children will hear in today's camp—Jesus cares about me. Whatever your role is for working with the children today, be intentional about telling them how very much God loves and cares for them and what His loves means to you.

Meditate today on this phrase from Luke 15:6: *"Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost."* Remind yourself throughout the day that God cares so very much for you and your well-being that He gave His life for you and He seeks you when you go astray. Ask Him to keep you close to Him and give you a heart to obey and serve Him.

TUESDAY
JESUS GIVES ME HOPE

Theme verse for the week: ***“His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.”*** 2 Peter 1:3

Today’s passage:

“¹ Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha...³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, ‘Lord, he whom you love is ill.’⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, ‘This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judea again.’...¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days...²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.’²³ Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’²⁴ Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’²⁵ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’²⁷ She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.’²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, ‘The Teacher is here and is calling for you.’²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him...³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴ And he said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’³⁷ But some of them said, ‘Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?’³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, ‘Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.’⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?’⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.’⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out.’⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’” John 11:1-44

Mary and Martha had sent for Jesus two days earlier, knowing that He could heal Lazarus. Can you sense their frustration when Jesus did not come as quickly as they assumed He would? To know that Jesus had the power to help Lazarus and yet He delayed His coming must have been extremely stressful and discouraging for them. However, Jesus knew exactly the purpose of this situation—people would see a miracle that only God could perform so God would be glorified. Mary and Martha wanted Lazarus healed, but God had a much bigger plan for Lazarus and the purpose was to glorify God.

This is such a great example of the hope that Jesus still offers us today. No, He more than likely won’t raise someone from death physically, but He absolutely raises the dead in Christ to their eternal and glorious home in heaven. He also meets our needs every day and many times with a plan bigger than

we'd have even thought to pray for. How many times have you asked God to work out a situation and then He didn't work it out the way you'd thought or wanted? It's in these times that we have to remind ourselves that He's the One with the plan. Because we don't know the future, we can't possibly know what is really best for us and for God's glory, but He does.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, "*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*" We can rest in the knowledge that God's plans are for good and not evil and that they give us a future and a hope. While sometimes His plans call for us to experience difficulty, they are always to teach us more about Him and grow us into the followers of Christ that He wants us to be—followers who shine His light to those around us. In our self-centeredness, we may think that God's role is to make us happy; however, His role is to make us Godly and that leads us to a joy that is far above the world's definition of happiness.

First Peter 1:3-9 says, "³*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ⁴*to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,* ⁵*who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* ⁶*In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,* ⁷*so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* ⁸*Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,* ⁹*obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*"

According to verse 3, what characteristic of God's nature causes Him to allow us to be born into a living hope? _____

Also according to verse 3, where does this living hope come from? _____

According to verse 4, where does this living hope lead us? _____

Describe in your own words the inheritance waiting for you in heaven. (Verses 4 and 5)

Verse 7 gives the result of the testing of our faith. What is it? _____

Verse 8 says, "*Though you have not seen him, you _____ him.*" Our love for God comes from our knowledge and acceptance of what He has done for us and what we believe about Him, giving us hope for the future.

Verse 9 gives the outcome of our faith as _____

God loves you so much that He gave His only Son so that you can experience the abundant life that He offers and enjoy eternity in heaven with Him. Because you know this, you can experience hope in any situation you face. If God can raise a dead man to life, and we know He can, then He can surely conquer whatever trial you face.

Meditate today on these words from First Peter 1:3: "*According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*" Thank God for this glorious hope that you can always have no matter what circumstances you face.

WEDNESDAY
JESUS HELPS ME BELIEVE

Theme verse for the week: ***“His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.”*** 2 Peter 1:3

Today’s passage:

“¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’ ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.’ ²⁴Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.’ ²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’ ²⁸Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ ²⁹Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’ ³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John 20:19-31

This is the story of the man we call “Doubting Thomas,” a title that probably none of us would want. However, most of us have most likely at some point in our lives had doubts about God’s willingness or power to do something in particular in our lives. The goal of today’s study is to help us establish a foundation of faith that leaves absolutely no room for any doubt about God’s love and care for us and His mighty power to accomplish anything He desires.

Thomas had to see Jesus with his own eyes to fully believe that He had risen from the grave. The other disciples had told him about Jesus appearing to them and the things He’d said to them, but Thomas refused to believe unless he saw Jesus for himself. The first word and last four words from Thomas in this passage make me cringe: *“Unless...I will never believe.”* I’ve always thought it merciful of Jesus to re-appear to the disciples later when Thomas was with them to prove to this doubter that He really had risen from the grave. This is a great example of Jesus’ longsuffering with His followers. Is there anything that you have trouble believing when it comes to Jesus’ involvement in your life?

Just as Jesus appeared to Thomas to settle his doubts, He also wants to assure you that He is real, that He loves you, and that He offers you an abundant life if you will only believe in Him.

I believe that many of us who are Christ followers have an event that we can call the cornerstone of our faith where God proved to us how very much He cares for us. I will share with you my cornerstone. I had parents who modeled faith in God, but I was a little slow in my own possession of it, of really being able to trust Him with every detail of my life. I had trusted Jesus as my Savior, but didn’t fully grasp His

desire to be involved in every area of my life. I was 24 and single, sharing an apartment with a friend. Prior to this, there were many times when I faced a problem that I fretted and worried about because I did not see a solution and just simply failed to trust God. Many times I did finally, after a period of fretting and worrying, decide to trust God and ask for His intervention. One night my roommate walked into my room and told me that she was moving at the end of the month. At first, panic set in but pretty quickly I decided that I just needed to trust God this time. So I prayed something like this: “Lord, You know that many times in the past I’ve tried and tried to work out a difficulty on my own and then when I couldn’t, I finally gave it to You and You worked it out Your way, which was much better than my way. So this time, I’m just going to skip trying to work this out my way and I’m giving this to You to work out in whatever way You see fit. I trust You to do whatever is Your will. You know that I can’t afford an apartment on my own and You also know that I don’t know a Christian girl who needs a roommate. But You have the power to work this out and I’m just asking You to take control of this situation and work it out.” I turned over and went to sleep with complete peace that God had this and that He would work it out. The next morning I went into the office and my boss called me into his office. He had his assistant director in there, as well. My boss said these words to me: “Sherry, Bobby and I have been talking and we have decided to give you your promotion six months early. We believe you’re ready.” I couldn’t believe my ears! I knew God would work it out, but I had no idea He’d work it out so fast! My boss went on to explain the new salary and it was exactly what I needed to be able to afford an apartment on my own. It all worked out so smoothly and better than I had imagined. This is why I consider this the cornerstone of my faith. I trusted God and He proved Himself trustworthy, so it firmly established in my soul that God loves me, He cares for my every need and He will provide whatever I need. Of course, I must do my part, but as long as I am obedient to do my part I can believe that He will do His part. Do you have a similar story of a time that you call the cornerstone of your faith? If so, describe it. If not, write your thoughts about how you can commit to trust God with every facet of your life so that you can see God’s faithfulness as you learn to believe Him at a higher level.

I cannot emphasize the importance and benefit of trusting God with every facet of your life. You can spare yourself of so much stress and worry by simply trusting God. This is something that you can, in a sense, pass down to your children and grandchildren. My daddy was one who simply trusted God in everything, but my mother was one who worried about everything. She was a very loving mother and I loved her dearly, as I did my daddy, but I saw a vast difference in the peace of my daddy and the stress of my mother. I saw clearly that I wanted to be like him. However, as much as I wanted to be like him, it took years of trying to do things my way before I finally relinquished control at age 24 and allowed God to work out my life His way. I must add that my mother did learn, later in life, to do the same and enjoyed the ability to simply trust God.

Do you see any similarities between Thomas and yourself? How would you respond if someone asked you how you know that Jesus is real? _____

Of course, hopefully you can give Scripture references about Jesus, but also hopefully you can tell of times that you knew without a doubt that He worked in your life to bring about His will.

Meditate today on these words from John 20:31: *“these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”* Thank God for sending His Son Jesus to teach and to perform miracles so that you can know that He is capable of accomplishing anything He wants to do in your life if you are willing and you believe that He is able.

THURSDAY
JESUS LOVES ME

Theme verse for the week: ***“His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.”*** 2 Peter 1:3

Today’s passages:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16 (NKJV)

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another.” John 13:34 (HCSB)

The verses above are the heart of the Gospel. When God created the universe and humanity, He knew that we would sin, which meant there had to be some way to reconcile us to Himself. If I were God, I think I would have placed the burden on people to make some kind of sacrifice that would be great enough to pay for their sins. This is what God did for all the years prior to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross—people offered sacrifices to cover their sins. However, all the sacrifices people had made to that point really could not cover all their sins. It does seem too easy for people to go about committing whatever sins they want and then just go kill an animal and consider their sins atoned for.

God’s ultimate plan from the time of creation was to offer His Son as the sacrifice for our sins so that we can have fellowship with Him. Think about this for a few minutes: Instead of our having to suffer the payment for our own sins, Jesus took our place, suffering the agony of the cross. Now all we have to do is accept His gift as payment for our sins and give our lives to Him to be used for the purpose for which we were created. So not only did God love us so much that He gave His Son for us, He also loved us enough that He created every single one of us with a glorious plan that, if we surrender to His plan, will give us an abundant life far more wonderful than we could ever imagine on our own. Jeremiah 29:11 describes this: *“For I know the plans I have for you’—this is the Lord’s declaration—‘plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’”* This two-fold example of God’s love for us—payment for our sins and a glorious life plan—are far more valuable than we can comprehend.

What are some examples in your life where you have seen God’s love for you?

How have you seen God’s plan unfold for you?

What are we to do with this great love and glorious plan that God has for us? Read John 13:34 above and write the three key words that we are to do. _____

Our response to God’s great love for us should be loving Him back and loving others. Take a few minutes to evaluate your love for others. Do you love others unconditionally? Or do you love others only when they love you and treat you well? As Christians, sometimes we are accused of being haughty and judgmental because of our stand on biblical principles. Let me emphasize that we must take a stand on

biblical principles, but that stand must be from a heart of love. However, at times those accusations are valid because we fail to love the person with whom we disagree or the person who doesn't act like we think they should. Remember how Jesus loved the woman at the well, who'd had five husbands and was at that time living with a man who was not her husband, and Zacchaeus, the tax collector who had cheated people out of their money. Jesus reached out to both of them in love and brought them into His kingdom. What we may fail to think about when we see people like this is that people who do not know Jesus and do not have the Holy Spirit in their lives, do not know the Bible, are simply living out life as they know it. They may not know any better. Until they meet Jesus and have a relationship with Him, we cannot expect them to live any other way. For most of them, the only way they will see Jesus is for a Jesus follower to reach out to them in love and share who He is and what He has done for them, then lovingly guide them into a relationship with Him. We cannot "beat up on people" because they don't behave as they should when they just don't know any better or they don't see the value of living differently. It is up to us to show them the value of Jesus—the peace, joy and meaningful life that He has waiting for them.

Meditate today on the words from John 3:16: ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”*** and these words from John 13:34: ***“Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another.”*** Thank God for loving you so much that He sent His Only Son to die for your sins and also for creating you with a plan and purpose for your life. Ask Him to help you follow that plan every step of the rest of your life. Also ask God to help you love others unconditionally with His love flowing through you.

FRIDAY
JESUS GIVES ME JOY

Theme verse for the week: ***“His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.”*** 2 Peter 1:3

Today’s passage:

“And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, ‘Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.’ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.” Acts 16:23-34

Read again the theme verse for the week above. Now think about the passage above describing Paul and Silas in prison and consider how the first passage applies to their situation. Write your thoughts.

Paul and Silas were not super-human; they were ordinary men whom God used to do mighty things for Him. It was God’s power within them that first gave them the power to preach God’s truths, then it was His power that enabled them to endure suffering. It was God’s power that gave them the spirit of joy that led to their singing songs of praise to God from inside the prison. It was God’s power that gave them the ability to remain in the prison when the doors were opened and their chains were loosed. It was also God’s power that opened the eyes of the jailer so that he and his family could believe in Jesus. Finally, it was God’s power that enabled Paul and Silas to walk out of the prison.

God’s divine power also gives us supernatural power to face difficulty with joy and to glorify Him in the midst of it, then to lead others to God because of it. It is easy to be joyful when life seems to be going our way. That’s not surprising to others around us. However, when difficulty comes, the world expects us to cave, to get depressed because that’s what the natural flesh does. So when we trust God and allow Him to fill us with His presence and power, we can magnify and glorify Him.

In writing a Christmas Bible study, I looked at the passage from Luke 1:46-47, which is the first part of what is called “Mary’s Song,” which she said after the angel had told her that she would be the mother of the Messiah. She said these words, according to the ESV translation: *“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...”* I love the words, “magnifies the Lord,” because it says that she glorifies God by making Him clearly seen to all around her and eventually to all the world. When we magnify something, we make it larger and clearer. Applying that to us, do our actions, countenance and

our words magnify God? Do they make it easier for others to know His character, His love? Does our spirit rejoice in God our Savior?

Consider these points in summarizing today's emphasis using the example of Paul and Silas:

1. Trust God for His power
2. Glorify Him and rejoice in Him
3. Point others to God
4. Know that freedom from difficulty awaits

To illustrate the joy that we can experience in the midst of difficulty, I would like to share an experience I had about a month ago. I had helped Tommy secure a gas grill in the back of his truck and when I went to get off the tailgate, I plopped my feet down and forgot that the day before, I had pulled the groin muscle in my right leg. When my feet hit the ground, my right leg gave way and I tumbled backwards onto the pavement. My head hit the pavement really hard and I later found out that I had suffered a subdural hematoma, sometimes called a brain bleed. It was a scary time because I heard many stories of people who had died from that. Most of the time, I was able to hold onto God's peace and simply trust Him. However, a couple of times when I heard stories of people who died from that, I felt a rush of anxiety flood over me when I lay down at night. The anxiety wasn't from dying, but from leaving my family that I'm so enjoying experiencing life with. Each time after a few tears and comfort from Tommy, then pouring out my fear to God, I felt His supernatural peace wash over me and I was able to turn over and go to sleep with complete peace. One of those times, as I was praying, I was reminded of the names given to the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. I called out to Jesus according to these names. As my Wonderful Counselor, I thanked Him that I could tell Him my fears and know that He understood, then know that He would work it out just as He saw fit. He gave me assurance that He had this. As Mighty God, I knew without a doubt that He had the power to heal me. Sometimes His healing is temporary and other times it is complete and eternal, but either way we have nothing to lose or to fear. As my Everlasting Father, I could feel His love, protection and comfort as He wrapped His arms around me. As my Prince of Peace, He washed away my fears and filled me with His peace. I once again realized that He really is my everything; He is all I need and I love Him so much. This experience taught me that we really have nothing to fear because God is with us to help us and to guide us, and trusting Him gives us the ability to face difficulty with joy.

This week of studies has hopefully taught each of us to simply trust God as we follow Him and then we are able to rest in these truths:

- Jesus cares about me
- Jesus gives me hope
- Jesus helps me believe
- Jesus loves me
- Jesus gives me joy

Meditate today on this verse from today's passage: "*And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.*" (Acts 16:34b) Thank God for His Word and His glorious gift of His Son that enables you to experience the true joy that can only be experienced through Him.

Thank you so much for investing your time, money and energy in pouring out the love of God into the lives of these children and their parents. We pray that God richly blesses you for being obedient to His call and that this experience has given you a heart full of joy.