

# GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

## Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide

### STRENGTH FOR THE STRUGGLE

Isaiah 40:27-31 (SB 04.03.2022)

#### Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

The people Isaiah was writing to had been in exile in Babylon for a long time and were beginning to lose hope. These people were far from home. They were demoralized, exhausted, and on the edge of despair. They felt like God had abandoned them. When they cried out, 'My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God' they were expressing their frustration with God's seeming absence. Have you ever felt that way? Have you found yourself questioning where God is amid all the chaos we see in our world? When everything is going well it's easy to believe in God. But then when life punches you in the face, you can find yourself crying out with Israel saying, 'Where are you God???' I love how God allows us to be honest with our struggles. That's what we see in this passage: God's people wrestling with the thought that God had abandoned them. The psalms are another place that models for us how to come to God with our raw emotions. If you are wrestling with despair today, you are not alone. We have all been there at one point or another. Let's get into our study...

1. What spoke to you from Pastor Daniel's sermon this week?
2. When was the last time that you were completely exhausted? What made you so tired?
3. Would you rather sleep more or do more? What does this preference teach you about your personality?

#### Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

#### HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ISAIAH 40:27-31

1. In context, these verses are about a people who have no strength and are wondering where God is in their struggles. When have you wondered where God is? What situations in life bring these questions up in your heart and mind?
2. Why do we so often forget who God is? Practically, what is going on in our hearts that leads us to forget?

If the Old Testament teaches us anything, it is that we are a forgetful people. At times we are not fundamentally different from the idol worshipers that were taken into exile in Isaiah's time. We, too, forget God and chase after other gods that cannot satisfy or save us. Being so consumed with our own lives, we forget about God and walk into disbelief. When that happens, it seems like our troubles are bigger than God, which is never the case. Isaiah called a forgetful and anxious people to stop and remember their God who is their strength.

1. The word "weary" (v. 28) means to be overcome by circumstances. Which of your circumstances in life produce that "weary" feeling in you?
2. Where do you turn when you are weary? Read 2 Corinthians 12:9. What are our limits designed to teach us? Has this lesson been a difficult one for you to learn? Why or why not?
3. How does the grace that we receive change in measure to the difficulties that we face? Share experiences of when God's grace has been enough for you despite any circumstance pressing in on you.

## BREAKTHROUGH! in 2022

4. Why is it good to be open about these struggles? How might being open about these experiences give you a chance to share about the hope you have placed in God?

In one sense, weakness is good for us because it teaches us that we are not God. Weakness shows us the depth of our need. Admitting that we are weak and need help places us in a position to get and receive strength from Jesus Christ, whose power is made perfect in our weakness. As we struggle, His grace to us is stronger. When we are open about these struggles both with believers and non-believers, it gives us the ability to show the internal work of Christ bearing fruit in our lives.

1. Our tendency when we are weary is to figure everything out on our own, yet Isaiah said the key to overcoming our weariness is waiting on the Lord. What does it look like for you to wait on the Lord?
2. Read John 15:5, focusing on the last phrase. What in your life causes you to think that you do not need God? What can you do to partner with God so that you remain aware of your need for Him?

Most of us do not like waiting. In a completely automated society, we rarely have to wait on anything. We have all the information we could ever need. We can contact people at any time and have them respond immediately. The Lord wants to meet our needs, but often we are expecting Him to compete with our devices and our ingenuity. God has no desire to enter that competition—nor is He required to. Instead, He wants us to remember that we can do nothing without Him. When we feel this deep need for Him, we are building our faith and renewing our strength.

1. The irony of strengthening ourselves in the Lord is that we don't have to do anything at all. What did he mean by this? Why do we so often make our faith about something we do instead of something we are becoming?
2. How does a faith that is focused primarily on doing actually lead to weariness?
3. The word "renew" (v. 31) is about a change or an exchange of our strength for the Lord's. Why is the cross the ultimate cure for our weariness?

Americans are doers. We are taught that with enough hard work, we can overcome anything. We make the mistake of applying this logic to our faith, but it doesn't work there. The way to receive strength from the Lord is to rest in Him and trust in His Word, not do so much that God will have to take notice. Christian faith is about what has been done for us on the cross, not what we can do to overcome our own problems. The truth is, our problems are simply too great to overcome. We need to daily turn our attention to the cross and be renewed by the work that Jesus has already done for us.

### Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

**Pastor Danial said "There is this massive reservoir by my house. At the beginning of the year, it is full of water. But then as withdrawals continually get made, the water level gets lower and lower. That's what life does to us. It drains us. Sometimes it feels like we don't have enough left. Jesus told me, 'You're not a reservoir, you are a river.' Rivers are fed from springs and headwaters that never run dry. 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and out of his innermost being shall gush fourth torrents of living water.' {John 7:37} When you are flowing as a river, people can make withdrawals, but they can't drain you because you have a replenishing source."**

1. What makes it hard for you to turn to God and receive His strength?
2. What role do we play in one another's lives to help each other remember who Jesus is and what He has done to give us His strength?

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3. Who do you know that is just burned out and weary? What can you do to come beside them and support them?

PRAYER - Praise God for being our source of strength when we have none. Pray that we would look to Him for renewal because He is the only source. Ask that He would give you rest for your soul, and that you would find strength and provision in His amazing and sufficient grace.

*“But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.” (Is. 40:31)*