



Perseverance

A BIBLE STUDY WITH

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A Bible study series.
Designed to cultivate revival
and to grow stronger, together.



WEEK 1

**DON'T
GIVE UP**



And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him,
and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”
And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

MATTHEW 14:31

It was a beautiful summer evening in mid-July, “Let’s go for a swim,” my friend said. Why not? What a great way to end a long summer day in Montana, so down to the lake we went! The lake was serene and calm, “this is going to be perfect,” I thought to myself. “You think we can make it out to the buoys?” my friend asked me. It seemed a little far and outside of my comfort zone, but my friend assured me that we would be fine because we could rest by holding onto the buoy before heading back to shore. Being overconfident young men, we both dove into the water and headed out into the lake.

Upon reaching the buoys we both realized there was no resting for us. Instead of the buoys giving us a breather as we had planned, the buoys sank as soon as we held onto them. We turned around and began to swim back to shore. Very quickly, I realized that I was not going to make it back. As I kept swimming, I realized the shore wasn’t getting any closer and then reality hit, I was going to drown. My entire life flashed before my eyes in a split second, memories that I hadn’t even thought of for years were before my eyes as if it had just happened yesterday! I saw my friend gaining ground as I began to fall behind, “I can’t make it,” I told him, “Just go on without me!” For a brief moment something strange happened, a determination came over me and a voice said “Don’t give up, the shore is getting closer even if it doesn’t seem like it.” There was an intense battle in my mind as my will to fight slowly diminished and panic took over, finally I gave up began to sink to the bottom of the lake. Surprisingly it wasn’t as deep as I thought. I pushed myself off the bottom and kept swimming towards shore, but once again

overcome by fatigue I went down a second time. Convinced that I wasn't going to give up, I pushed myself off the bottom again and continued forward until I reached the shore.

My mind goes to the account in Matthew 14:22-33. Here we see Jesus right after He lost His cousin, John the Baptist, going to a place of solitude. The scriptures don't explain exactly why He went there, but I believe that Jesus, being God in the form of a man, needed to grieve. The crowds somehow found out where Jesus was reconnecting with His Father and they followed Him there. They left the comforts of life, where they knew they could

Jesus was there, they knew He could supply their every need.

buy food, all of their daily needs, and went to a desert place. This place was a barren land that was empty. Upon their departure, the people knew they would not have the comforts of life that the city offered, but they would have Jesus. He was there, they knew He could supply their every need. Jesus fed them spiritually and physically.

Jesus once again leaves everyone to go up the mountain and pray alone. His disciples went across the lake ahead of Him, in the fourth watch of the night (between 3:00-6:00AM). The wind was boisterous on the lake. There in the middle of the storm Jesus came walking on the water, His disciples were overcome by fear and thought it was ghost. Here is where we pick up the story in Matthew 14:27-32. "But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased."

There are so many different nuggets of truth that we can glean from this account. We see the disciples going across the Sea of Galilee heading to the land of Gennesaret as Jesus had instructed them. They go during the fourth watch of the night which happens to be the darkest time of night. The storm comes and begins to overtake the disciples. Their situation seems impossible, how could they survive? Then Jesus once again appears in the middle of their storm, fear grips their hearts as they think He is a ghost. Peter desiring to believe Jesus says, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to You on the water.” So, He says “Come.”

How often do we find ourselves in the middle of a storm and Jesus calls out to us and says “Come, step out of the boat, step out in faith and follow Me.” We let go of the fear and we step out of our comfort zone, where things may have been overwhelming in our situation, yet Jesus still calls us to Himself. As humans we begin to think that walking on the water is something we can accomplish on our own and for a moment we take our eyes off our Provider, the one who is sustaining us, and we begin to sink. In the chaos of the storm Jesus reaches out His hand and pulls us back to our feet, as He gets into the boat with us as we invite Him into our situation, the winds cease, and He brings peace into our lives. I think of how easily things could have changed that July night when we were on the lake, the line between panic and persevering to the end was so thin because the fear of what “may happen” began to paralyze me.

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So often when the enemy sees that God is using you, he will attack! He will try to discourage you; he may even try to take you out. The Bible says that “the thief has come to steal, kill and destroy.” When the battle to believe rages in your mind and it

seems like all odds are stacked against you. When the devil tells you to give up because it's not worth the fight. It is in those moments we need to reach out our hand and take hold of the Father's hand as He brings us back to shore.

Hebrews 12:1-2, "Therefore, we also are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with patience the race before us (perseverance) looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Can you relate to Peter as he cried out “Lord, save me?”

Have you experienced the peace that Jesus brought into their storm?

How can you invite Jesus into your storm this week?

WEEK 2

RESTORE

The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath He recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, and I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

PSALM 18:20-24

I was eight years old when my Dad decided I was old enough to travel with him across the Atlantic Ocean to Africa! On the way over, we had a 24-hour layover in Frankfurt Germany. Being the adventurous people we are, we decided to go out and explore the city. We had a great time visiting different places and seeing the cobblestone streets, but after several hours, it was time to head back to the airport and wait for our flight. Once we arrived back at the airport, I decided it was time to take a nap. Anyone who has slept in an airport knows how uncomfortable this can be. As an eight-year-old it was easy to curl up on a chair next to Dad and fall asleep while he read the latest newspaper. After sleeping for some time, I woke up and no one was around from our group, even my Dad was gone! The missionary family we were helping move to Africa were nowhere in sight. Fear filled my little heart as I thought that they most likely had boarded the flight and left me behind in a building with thousands of people in a different country where I couldn't understand a word anyone said. Trembling with fear and tears in my eyes I went to the front desk and tried to explain to the ticket agent that I had been abandoned/left behind by my group! Thankfully she understood my dilemma and we began to search the crowd for any familiar faces. Finally, I saw the family who we were traveling with at a different gate. They were just sitting there, totally oblivious to what was going on. A few moments later, I saw my Dad and older brother coming around the corner towards us. You see, my older brother

who was also traveling with us was not feeling the best from jet lag and probably the food they served us on the plane. While I was sleeping, he asked our Dad if they could go find something else to eat in one of the airport restaurants. My Dad immediately agreed and asked one of the men who was traveling with us to keep an eye on me while I slept. In the meantime, our departure gate changed so the group moved to the new gate and left me sleeping by the old gate. The fear and insecurity that came over me during that time is something I'll never forget!

As I ponder this event that took place years ago, it made me think of my spiritual life and how so often the cares of life weigh us down and we begin to grow weary in the mundane. Before we realize what is happening, we slowly begin to drift away; heaviness takes over our spiritual eyes and we fall asleep. It may not be gross sin that we fall into; the devil isn't foolish enough to tempt us with something outrageous like robbing a bank, but what

We slowly begin to drift away; heaviness takes over our spiritual eyes and we fall asleep.

about being honest with people when they ask, "How are you doing?" and we answer, "I'm doing great, thanks for asking." When we know in our hearts that there's a deep struggle or we're walking through an intense season of life. You might say something like, "Well, I don't want everyone to know what I'm really going through cause it's none of their business." I'm not telling you that it's time to share your deepest struggles with everyone that asks you, but it's

okay to be vulnerable and recognize that sometimes we don't have it all together. What about being honest with our taxes, or when you clock out at the end of a long day and decide to just add on a couple minutes? The boss won't even notice. These small, seemingly insignificant decisions slowly pull us away from being ONE with our Father; and before you realize it, you haven't only drifted apart but you are no longer in communication with Him.

King David is a perfect example of someone (who was anointed by God) that allowed life to get in the way of his connection with Jesus. We tend to think of David as a mighty warrior; the one who the people sang his praises and said, “Saul has slain his thousands but David his tens of thousands.” We think of him as the young man who relied completely on God for his victory over Goliath. The one who played his harp for King Saul so the evil spirit would stop tormenting him. Yet what about the David who allowed lust to lead him into committing adultery and then he murdered a man to cover his tracks? The sin he committed greatly displeased the Lord and for this, the Lord took the life of his son; yet look at David’s response in Psalms 18:20-24.

How could David speak these words? He committed adultery and shed innocent blood, yet the Lord rewarded him according to his righteousness? David had a heart that pursued God and when he fell, he admitted the wrong he had committed and said, “I have sinned before the Lord”. I believe the reason why David could say these things is because he understood whose he was. His desire to be one with God was greater than his desire to be praised and honored by men. Psalm 51:1-19 is a profound section of scripture that gives us a glimpse into the heart of David when he is confronted by Nathan the prophet about this sin. Verses 10-12 say, “Create in me a clean heart oh God and renew a steadfast spirit in me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me by your generous Spirit.”

David understood
whose he was.

From the moment I awoke from my sleep until I was reunited with my earthly Father, I was filled with so much uncertainty and so many questions. Searching for any familiar face in the airport, nothing brought a peace and a calmness to the situation like the moment when I saw my Dad walking towards me! What felt like an eternity of desperation and searching all ended in a moment. Even though the ticket agent was very reluctant to allow

me to go back to my Dad, there was no holding me back. I recognized his face!

How many of us feel like we're "lost in an airport?" Maybe you're in a season of life where the choices you've made have led you away from the Father and you've been spiritually lulled to sleep. Many times in life I've found myself in the scenario explained above, yet the difference is my Heavenly Father doesn't leave me. Choices I've made have caused me to stray from his love. When the flesh begins to war with the Spirit and selfishness takes over, I find myself searching for things to fill that void in my life. It takes persistence and setting your heart to seek the face of Jesus to restore that connection with Him. He promises that when you seek Him with all of your heart, you will find Him! James 4:8, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

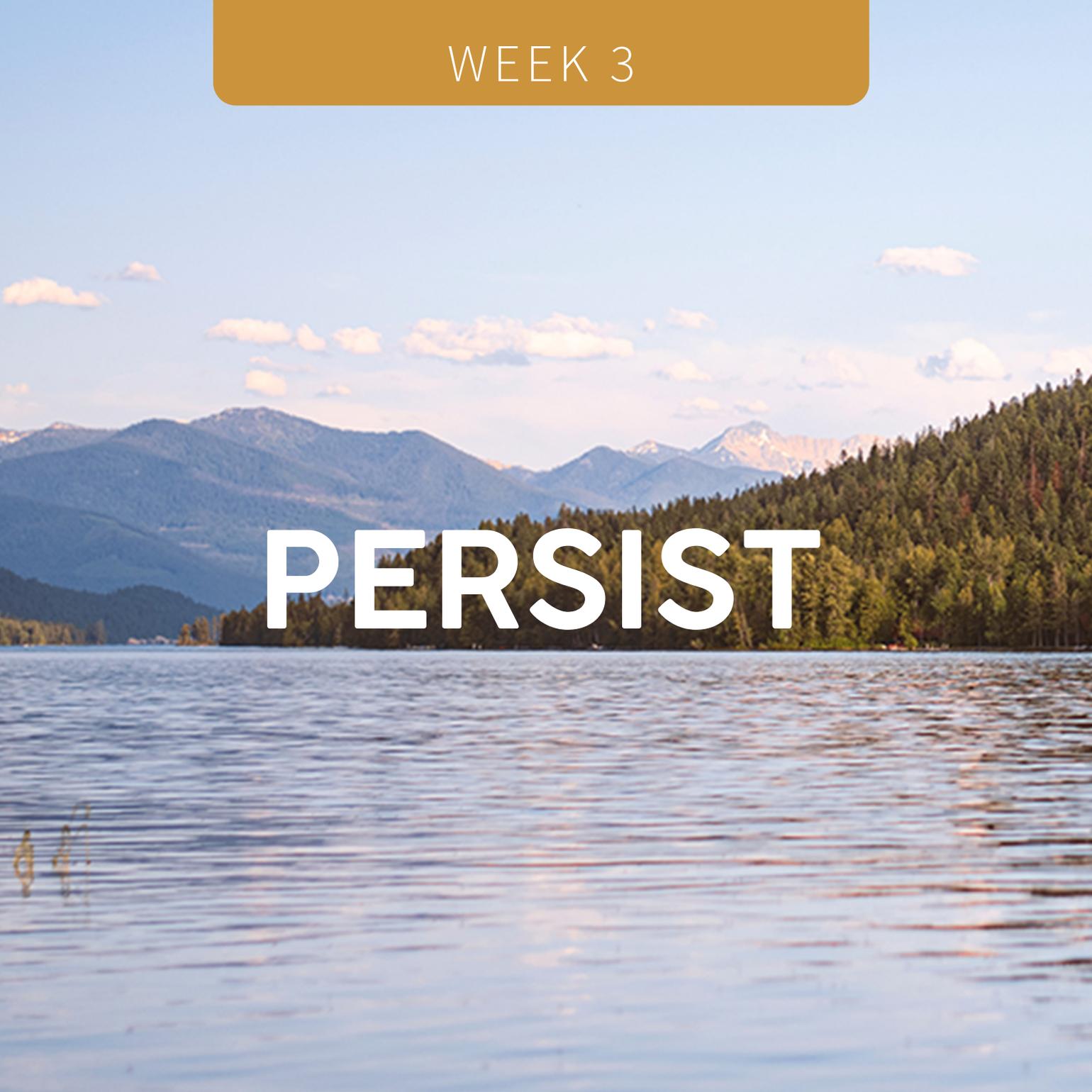
Have you ever felt lost and needed to find your way back to the Father?

Have you persisted in prayer, seeking His face during a difficult season?

What choices have you made this week that have led you closer to the Father?

WEEK 3

PERSIST



He that endures to the end shall be saved.

MARK 13:13

It was late fall 2018, it seemed like everything that could go wrong was going wrong! From wrecking my new truck, to overturning a 65,000 pound machine and walking away miraculously without a scratch. Then I accidentally ignited an expensive piece of equipment on fire and lost the entire machine. Then to top it all off, I had my truck fixed at a body shop and rolled it six weeks later! Life was anything but normal for me those four months. But worse than anything, I felt like the presence of God had left my life. The depression and anxiety I faced daily was almost crippling.

Then came the suicidal thoughts, was this worth it? What have I done wrong to deserve this? Was God angry with me? These thoughts plagued my mind every waking moment of my day. At the time I was in a relationship with my now beautiful wife who honestly was my rock through those times. But trying to build a relationship during those times seemed extremely difficult! The depression was thick, the suicidal thoughts were so real, and God's voice was silent. Or was I even listening? I often found myself on my face before God begging Him to give me answers, begging Him to just speak one word! Oh, if only He would give me a moment in His presence again, but there was only silence. Yet something deep inside kept me going. When my faith was so shaken that I wanted to give in, I felt like there was a rock wall I was up against and that I couldn't go anywhere.

The next year my fiancé and I got married at the end of May, the deep depression wasn't as strong, suicidal thoughts weren't plaguing me as often as before. But God, where are you? His voice was still silent. We managed to make it through an extremely difficult summer as newlyweds yet life seemed to slowly be getting better. Then, one night after we had been

married for only four months, I had a dream. In this dream I had such a sweet connection with Jesus and His Spirit was flowing through me, it was glorious!! I immediately woke up and realized that something had broken in the spiritual realm, His presence wasn't just in the dream but it was real!! I began to weep, and I immediately asked God why He hadn't spoken to me for so long? Why had I faced so much depression and anxiety for the past year?

Where do you find yourself on this journey? Maybe you've recently lost your job or possibly a close friend or a family member. You may be walking through a difficult breakup and your heart is broken and you feel like it's hopeless to try and pick up all the shattered pieces. Why press on when no one is watching or listening, does anyone even care that my heart is hurting? All these are thoughts that I'm sure you can identify with.

My mind goes to Luke 18:1-8, the parable of the persistent widow. "And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.' And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?'"

During that season of my life where God's voice was so quiet, it seemed like I was in the same situation as this widow. My adversary was against me continually and the spiritual warfare was intense! This widow continued to return and plead her case before the unjust judge until he would hear her case. I'm sure that there were times when she would

go to stand before him that thoughts of doubt would arise in her heart, “What’s the use, he didn’t hear me before so why would he listen this time.” In times like these I believe it is imperative to surround ourselves with a strong community of people who speak love and light into our lives. Friends who can combat the lies of the enemy and plead our case before the King of Kings with us!

The enemy is so successful in deceiving us and manipulating our minds to believe the lies he’s trying to feed us. But let’s not focus on that, there is One who is greater than all of the anxiety and the lies, the suicidal thoughts and the depression. He wants to see us set free more than anything!

At the end of that parable Jesus asks a strange question. “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?” Why would He ask a question like that? I believe that God is seeking for people who will in faith, believe His word even when you have zero evidence that what He says is true! Isn’t that what faith is? He’s searching for someone who will relentlessly pursue the throne of God and cry out to Him! Then He says “And will not God give justice to His elect, who cry to Him day and night? Will He delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily.”

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people who will in
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Try something different this next week. When a thought comes into your mind and it’s a negative thought regarding your situation or about yourself, ask this one simple question. Who said that? As you learn to recognize the difference between the voice of the Father and the lies of the enemy, half of the battle is won. God’s voice calms you while Satan’s voice rushes you. God’s voice convicts you while Satan’s voice condemns you. God’s voice enlightens you while Satan’s voice confuses you.

You see, in 2 Chronicles 32:31; God removed His Spirit from Hezekiah to see what was in his heart, He left him for a season. Even though I felt that God's presence wasn't as tangible during that difficult time, I believe that He literally carried me through those valleys. I believe that He is the reason why I'm still standing today! God was silent for 400 years and then on that glorious night, when the angels announced His birth, Jesus appeared on the scene. He lived His life on this earth and endured temptations just as you and I have. But at the cross, the veil of darkness was torn so that we can now walk in the presence of the almighty King!

Who said that?

Studies have shown that it takes a little over two months for a habit to become automatic and between eight and nine months for a habit to be fully formed. So don't be discouraged in the next few weeks as you ask yourself the question "Who said that?" If your natural tendency is to believe the lies, it takes time and persistence to renew our minds. Ask your life group or a close friend to hold you accountable with your response to these thoughts and to pray for you. "Be ye therefore transformed by the renewing of your mind."

JESUS APPEARED ON THE SCENE. HE LIVED HIS LIFE ON THIS EARTH AND ENDURED TEMPTATIONS JUST AS YOU AND I HAVE. BUT AT THE CROSS, THE VEIL OF DARKNESS WAS TORN SO THAT WE CAN NOW WALK IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ALMIGHTY KING!

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Have you ever felt like God has been silent in your life for a season?

How often do you find yourself crying out to God for His Spirit?

Can you commit to asking yourself “Who said that?” for the next week?

WEEK 4

**KEEP
GOING**

Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, “rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!”

LUKE 15:8-9

Perseverance, what does that word mean? To persevere in the face of adversity is to keep going upstream against the current, especially when everyone else seems to be going with the current. When it seems like you just can't go on anymore yet something inside of you tells you not to give up!

Here's a simple yet profound story that happened to me personally and reminded me of how God cares about the small things that take place in our lives. Recently my wife and I bought a house and moved out of our old house and into our new one. In the process of moving, I lost my briefcase which happened to have some important documents in it including our passports! After getting settled into our new place we searched everywhere in the house, including all the moving boxes and our filled suitcases but did not have any success in finding my briefcase. In my line of work, I travel a lot and the next day I was supposed to leave the country for a short trip. After informing the company that I work for about my dilemma they gave me an ultimatum, I had to find the passport by five o'clock that evening or they were going to send someone else in my place. At this point, it was already well after four o'clock, so I knew that we only had a few minutes left to find my passport that had been lost for a couple months. With options running out, I decided to commit everything to God! I stood there in my office and I prayed a very simple prayer, three words “God, help me.” It wasn't more than 30 seconds later that I had my briefcase and passport in my hands! Does Jesus care about the small things in life? I believe He does.

In Luke 15:8-9, Jesus speaks about The Parable of the Lost Coin. You may ask, what does all of this have to do with perseverance? The parable we just read says that the woman lit a lamp, swept the house, and searched carefully until she found the lost coin. Jesus so beautifully brings out the importance of perseverance in this passage, to be diligent when seeking, and persistent until we have an answer.

Too often in our day and age, when life requires us to light a candle and sweep the house, or fall on our knees and intercede until we reach heaven, our first response tends to be to call our friends and neighbors asking them to “pray.” Then we set up a board of directors to light a lamp, and last but definitely not least, we create a committee to “sweep the house” and search diligently in hopes that we all together will find that one coin which was lost.

We run to the people around us first and forget that Jesus is where we should run to!

This may sound to you like we don’t need community or structure in our lives, but it is the opposite of that. We so often get things backwards in our lives and run to the people around us first and forget that Jesus is where we should run to!

Back to the lost passport, when I decided to give up and commit everything to God, even though that may sound spiritual, unfortunately it was my last resort. I had tried everything I could think of and searched everywhere I thought of, yet I still came up empty handed. When my earthy efforts failed, I simply gave up. Often, I’ve found myself so wrapped up in my own problems that I forget to look outside of myself for help. I try to figure things out on my own with different techniques and ideas yet, as each one fails, and I’ve exhausted all possibilities I run back to Jesus in the end.

I believe God’s desire is that when we face trials, we run to Him and find our help from Him first. His desire is that He would be the number one priority in our lives and every desire we have in our hearts would be filled with His Spirit! Many people do not realize that the enemy attacks you in the areas of your greatest callings, but let’s remember, the

power to overcome battles that you may be fighting and have fought for years comes from surrendering to the One who has already conquered your battles. Allow the power of Jesus to overtake you and empower you to become who He has created you to be. You may be at a place in your life where you should find someone else who is struggling to survive, or just needs someone else to walk beside them. In this season, it is incredible how our perspectives will change when we no longer focus on self, but look to Jesus for our strength and find others along the way who may need a friend.

Where do you find yourself in all of this? Maybe you can relate with me or with my tendencies? Maybe you could be the person who is interceding for someone else who is fighting a battle? Wherever you may find yourself in this race, remember this verse:

1 Thessalonians 5:17, which tells us to “pray without ceasing.” Does that mean we’re supposed to walk around 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with our heads bowed in prayer? Or what about always being in the spirit of prayer, having a continual connection or open line of communication to the Father through his Son, Jesus. I believe in this passage one of the points the writer is trying to bring out is that we shouldn’t give up on praying for what we believe is supposed to happen! Maybe God has given us a vision for something. It may be that we’re agonizing for the soul of a loved one who is lost and doesn’t know Jesus. Don’t give up praying and seeking when your prayer isn’t answered right away. Many times, there is a battle that needs to be fought, strongholds that need torn down and ground reclaimed in the name of Jesus before we see the answers to our prayers! There may be things that you’ve prayed for, and you’ll never see the answer on this side of eternity. But God sees and hears those who cry out to Him. Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened unto you.

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WE SEE THE ANSWERS TO OUR PRAYERS!**

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

What have you been praying for that hasn't been answered? _____

What vision has God given you that requires persistence? _____

Who is that person your life that needs you to intercede for them? _____



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