

Res · o · lute

(adj.) Admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering

DEVELOPING "EVEN IF" FAITH

Lesson 4: Group Session

We looked at these "even if" statements in our first week, which were spoken by two heroes of faith in the New Testament. Let's look at them one more time:

But I will rejoice **even if** I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God.
(Philippians 2:17a, NLT) ~Paul

But **even if** you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." (1 Peter 3:14, NIV) ~Peter

The final comparison in our Resolute study is going to be between two New Testament heroes of faith, John the Baptist and Peter; and we're going to specifically contrast the resolve of New Testament heroes of faith before and after the resurrection of Jesus.

God's Story



This is the story of the Bible. The whole Old Testament points to humanity's need for a Savior and is the backstory for the coming of Jesus Christ.

New Testament Heroes of Faith: Before the Resurrection

John the Baptist

God sent an angel to break his 400-year silence.

About John the Baptist:

- He was prophesied about in the Old Testament. (Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6)
- His birth itself was a _____. (Luke 1:5-25)
- His mother was a relative of Mary, the mother of Jesus. (Luke 1:39-45)
- His father, Zechariah, was filled with the _____ at John's birth and prophesied that John would prepare the way for the Messiah. (Luke 1:67-79)
- He grew up in the wilderness where he became "strong in spirit." (Luke 1:80)
- He began his ministry after the word of God came to him in the _____. (Luke 3:2-3)

Just before Jesus began his ministry, Jesus went to John to be baptized. This is John's testimony about what he experienced in that moment:

Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One." (John 1:32-34, NIV).

Later, after John the Baptist is put in prison, we read this:

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Matthew 11:2-3, NIV)

Peter

In the beginning of this lesson we looked at Peter's "even if" faith statement, the one that proved true. But Peter had another "even if" statement:

Peter said to him, "**Even if** I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same. (Matthew 26:35, ESV)

And this one preceded Peter's three-time denial of Jesus.

John the Baptist had _____ and _____ God when he baptized Jesus. But what about Peter?

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. (Matthew 17:1-3, NIV)

So what happened in these moments of faltered faith?

Confusion happened.

Their focus shifted from _____ (faith) to _____.

In this moment, John the Baptist and Peter:

FOCUSED (on confusion)------(broke the rest of the cycle)

Confusion vs. Understanding

The definition of the word confusion is this: "lack of understanding; uncertainty"

**Other than fear, nothing can make our _____ spiral out of control
as quickly as _____.**

There were hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah, which the Jewish people were well aware of. There were prophecies which spoke of:

1. _____ and a kingdom the Messiah would bring (e.g. Isaiah 9:6-7 & Zecharian 9:9-10)
2. _____ and death the Messiah would endure (e.g. Psalm 22 & Isaiah 53)

ALL the prophecies were true and fulfilled through Jesus Christ, but what the Jews failed to recognize was that the prophecies which *didn't* feel good were the conduits to the ones that did!

It was the _____ which would bring about the _____.

They could have never imagined that God's plan was to bring the *victory* of his Son out of the *sacrifice* of his Son. They could have never imagined that God's plan was to raise a *kingdom* by *raising* a cross.

The Bible is clear about the fact that there will be many things we don't understand:

A person's steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand their own way? (Proverbs 20:24, NIV)

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV)

**We tend to place trust in our _____, which we form out of our
_____, all without realizing we even do it.**

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV)

Expectations are _____, and we often don't even know we have them until they are dashed.

John the Baptist and Peter knew Jesus was the fulfillment of the promise, but they didn't understand the _____ to the promise because they didn't understand the _____ of the promise.

**Jesus was in the PROCESS of fulfilling the PURPOSE of the PROMISE,
but the PROCESS wasn't what the people expected,
so the PROCESS caused them to doubt the PROMISE
because they didn't know its PURPOSE!**

This is what Jesus said after John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was in fact the Messiah:

"Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me." (Luke 7:23, NIV)

When we face confusion and unmet expectations, we come to a _____. Again, we have a choice to make:

1. We focus on our confusion, and _____ threatens our faith.
2. We focus on our God, and our confusion _____.

Faith: confidence in and sureness that our God is in control, that he is good and loving, and that therefore his ways are good and perfect.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, (Ephesians 3:20, NIV)

The Jews thought their Messiah was coming to save them from an *earthly* enemy to build an *earthly* kingdom. But,

God's purpose wasn't simply to save _____ from an earthly enemy to build an _____ kingdom, God's purpose was to save _____ from a _____ spiritual enemy to build a _____ kingdom!

New Testament Heroes of Faith: After the Resurrection

Peter and Paul were monumental in building the early church.

But I will rejoice **even if** I lose my life... ~Paul

But **even if** you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed... ~Peter

And they did - suffer and lose their lives. So what was different after the resurrection than before?

Peter, Paul, and the rest of the apostles had an understanding of what they were

_____ **for, which gave them a resolute faith they were willing to** _____ **for!**

This is what took place just before Jesus ascended into Heaven:

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:45-49, NIV)

They understood how the story _____.

They understood the _____ of the promise.

They were equipped with a _____ not their own.

And praise God, these are the same advantages we have!

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you (Acts 1:8a, NIV)

and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, (Ephesians 1:19-20, NIV)

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, (Ephesians 3:20, NIV)

In Closing

Once again, we're going to end back where we started this whole thing. When confusion strikes, it's what we DO, where we focus, that matters.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7, NIV)

When our focus is fixed on God, the peace of God, which transcends our _____ to understand, will transcend our _____ to understand.

John the Baptist: John went straight to Jesus with his questions, and Jesus affirmed him! (Matthew 11:1-11; Luke 7:18-28)

Peter: Right after Peter denied Jesus the third time, Jesus looked straight at him (Luke 22:61). Jesus wouldn't have been able to make eye contact with Peter if Peter hadn't come close enough for him to do so!

When Jesus went to that cross, He saw _____.

We understand how this story ends, even if we don't understand the scenes. We understand the purpose of the promise, even if we don't understand the process. And we have a power source not our own!

Therefore, Oh Lord, help us to have confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. No matter the fear, no matter the testing, and no matter the confusion, help us to keep our focus on you so that we will have resolute, "even if" faith. Amen.