



# COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2010

7:00PM

STUDY OUTLINE #023

**Scriptural Text: 2 Corinth 4: 1-18, John 6:60-68**

**Theme: Discipleship and Conflicts**

**Words in marble: To remain fit, you must work out your faith daily**

In normal life everyone wants everything made easy. We want learning made easy, prosperity, examinations, relationships and all aspects of life made easy and we desire to extend same to discipleship.

We live in a 'microwave' era with a passing phrase of 'dream it, name it and claim it.' It is a world of freebies and hand-outs with no hassles, pains, challenges, conflicts, pressures or process.

This is however strange to true life in Christ. There is no overnight success. Every prize has a price (Joshua 1: 8-9, Philippians 1: 29; Mark 10: 29-30).

In comparison to formative stages of a child, there is no stability or growth without process: encountering challenges, risks or near misses. In all these, there is however an in-built mechanism and fortitude to forge ahead even in the face of setbacks (Mark 4: 26-29; Philippians 2: 12, 2 Timothy 3: 10-12).

## Realities of our discipleship walk

- The path or route of discipleship is adorned with encounters, challenges, wars, conflicts, battles, and pressures not aimed for our failure but for our good (**Jude 3-4, 1 Timothy 6: 12, Ephesians 6: 10-18; 2 Corinth 10; 3-6; 2 Timothy 2: 2-4**).
- They are meant to prove our trust and utter dependence on His saving grace (Numbers 14, Numbers 13: 30).
- They are to confirm our loyalty while providing platform for maturity (character development) and increase spiritual stature (Romans 5: 1-5; James 1: 2-4; 2 Corinth 4: 1-end).
- They are avenues for His manifest glory and witnessing to souls (Exodus 14: 13, 30-31).
- The process and practice of discipleship is on going and not once for all concern (Philippians 2: 12).
- Every segment of the process is pre-planned or predetermined by an all knowing God before we arrived on this part of eternity (Acts 15: 18; Hebrews 4:2-6; Psalm 139: 14-16).
- God stays through the course of discipleship process. He never abandons or absconds on duty (Psalm 20, Psalm 34; 19).
- Our experiences are consolidated as comfort for other people (Romans 15: 4; 2 Corinth 1; 3-7). **We can all relate this to Christ (Hebrew 5:8).**

## Understanding the challenges

On their own the challenges are not offensive. Rather it is our response to them and prevailing circumstances at their occurrence determine their effects on us, whether positive or negative.

The purpose and effects of challenges above, rather than benefiting us have been whittled down through our responses.

We shall use this medium to **identify** our seeming weaknesses and vulnerabilities and strengthen our resolve to finish strong in the race of life (1 Corinth 10: 12).

1. We group the encounters under different headings for proper analysis:

- a. True testings in situations calling for greater commitment.
- b. Distressing battles, uncertainties or discouraging moments as in Job.
- c. Or conflicts, pressures, tensions, wars, temptations, etc.

## A. Testings

**According to Chambers Dictionary, Test is** a critical examination or trial of a person's or thing's qualities or abilities, etc.

**2.** anything used as the basis of such an examination or trial, for example, a set of questions or exercises. **3.** to examine (a substance) to discover whether another substance is present or not.

**Webster defines it as:**

- Trial; a critical examination, observation, or evaluation;
- A test of faith, patience, or stamina through subjection to suffering or temptation;
- The procedure of submitting a statement to such conditions or operations as will lead to its proof or disproof or to its acceptance or rejection.
- To compare with a standard; to try; to prove the truth or genuineness of any thing by experiment or by some fixed principle or standard; as, to test the soundness of a principle. Job becomes a perfect example (**Job 23: 10. We**



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OUTLINE No. 023 Thursday, March 18, 2010.

## **DISCIPLESHIP AND CONFLICTS** *(Continued)*

**discuss more on him in the next study.)**

God deliberately orchestrates some encounters to test us (Job 7: 7-8). This confirms our loyalty, establishes our obedience, increases our stature and validates His faithfulness to covenant or promises. There are situations of delays to promises or expectations triggering off anxieties, worries, suspense and irresistible options. They all demand response from us. The periods of waiting or passing moments of the encounters place demands to determine our trust/ dependability on Him to pull through.

We require fruit of the Spirit to align with heaven's timing to go by the test.

One of the true ways of testing our character is through our perseverance level (Isaiah 30: 15).

The experience we garner after each test informs our maturity and propels us to the next level.

We can profile the life of Abraham in the book of **Genesis 12, 15, 17, 21-22; Acts 7.**

- Abraham believed in God, turned his back to idols and it was counted to him for righteousness (Romans 4:1-5).
- He gained favour of God and became the progenitor of our covenant.
- He received a promise of a Seed to come in due time
- His expectations were high and anxiety caught up with him, when there was seeming delay (Proverbs 13: 12; Genesis 15: 1-6; 17:17; Proverbs 23:18)
- God confirms where his centre of universe is immediately after sending the promise (do our gifts take our attention off our giver?) Genesis 22.
- The instruction was strict, demanding, yet filled with options.
- He had ample opportunity for natural reasoning to have the better part of him.
- He defied his natural instinct and stuck to divine instruction. He chose to obey rather than opt for convenience and alternatives.
- God attested to Abraham's loyalty, obedience and re-validated His covenant with him (Genesis 22: 11-18; Hebrew 11: 17-19).

Abraham's obedience was on the line. He goofed in succumbing to options but never stuck to same. He finally had a choice to reason out instructions to ascertain its correctness. In the same way, Zachariah passed his test and God proved His faithfulness over his household (Luke 1: 1-17).

### **B. The Israelites came under test but buckled (Hebrew 3: 7-19).**

God gave a verdict on them. Right through their journey in the wilderness, at every stage, including spying the Promised Land, their obedience, loyalty, absolute trust and dependence on God was put to test.

The experience of Israelites in the wilderness was to build character traits and develop dependability on divine leadership; to teach them war strategies and embolden them against real and potential enemies. Unfortunately, they never followed God through and did not live up to His test. They failed (**Psalm 87, 78; Exodus 15:25, 13:17-22; Numbers 13, 14**).

**NB. There is one remarkable thing with their test: God was ever present with them but they were preoccupied with their lust, doubts, fears, assumptions and stubbornness to appreciate this privileged role over them.**

In our race of life, we are so uptight that we forget that He is always there with us.

***Oh what a friend we have in Jesus and what needless things we bear. There would have been no room for fear, doubt, and feeling of uncertainty (Isaiah 41: 8-14, 43; 1-4; John 16: 7-33, 14: 14-33).***

As disciples, we have encounters daily. We can learn from these events and approve ourselves before Him. One thing is clear: we will go through His test before He brings us to a place of rich fulfillment (Psalm 66).

**The question is,** how do you view your current situation of delay and unfulfilled desires?

What are your responses?

Can you put Him into the picture or go all alone? (Proverbs 3: 5-7; Psalm 37:1-7).

**Prayers:** Matthew 11: 28-30; Isaiah 28: 16, Isaiah 26: 3.

Lord, help me for my mind to stay on you at all times; give me grace to trust and obey you