

Bible Character Study

Peter | Matthew 14:24-33; Luke 5:1-9; Mark 14:29-31, 37-38, 66-72

Trials Get Our Focus Back on Christ

Sometimes we go through seasons where life is good. Things seem to be going well, our families are on track, and we have what we need... and in those moments of smooth sailing, sometimes it is easy to get our eyes off Jesus. Have you ever felt yourself getting distracted from God by other things in your life? When this happens, it is usually trials that help us see our desperate need and cause us to cry out to Him as the waves of worry, fear, and anxiety build around us. Our focus is essential to staying on the path that God has for us—and trials are God's tool for redirecting our focus back to Him.

Jeremiah 29:13 (NLT) *"If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me."*

Philippians 3:13-14 (NLT) *"...but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."*

Matthew 6:33 (NLT) *"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."*

Proverbs 4:25 (NLT) *"Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path."*

Hebrews 12:2 (NLT) *"We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne."*

Trials Help Us See Our Pride So We Can Humble Ourselves

What does pride look like? It is something very easy to spot in others, but typically we have a blind spot when it comes to seeing it in ourselves. This is why God actively opposes the proud. When we walk in pride, God uses trials to bring us to our knees in humility. Peter learned this lesson over and over throughout his life as Jesus faithfully spoke truth into his life to humble him. In what areas of your life does God need to humble you?

1 Peter 5:6 (NLT) *“So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.”*

Proverbs 11:2 (NLT) *“Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”*

Proverbs 16:18 (NLT) *“Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.”*

Proverbs 29:23 (NLT) *“Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor.”*

James 4:6 (NLT) *“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

James 4:10 (NLT) *“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.”*

1 Peter 3:8 (NLT) *“Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.”*

Trials Show Us Our Need for God's Mercy

Trials come in many forms and for many reasons. While some trials come merely to teach us perseverance even when we are living righteously, others are the direct result of our choices. Have you experienced difficult consequences for choices you have made? Have you felt the pain of reaping what you sowed? Peter did. When he denied the Lord three times just before Jesus went to the cross, he went away and wept bitterly. His pain after Christ's death was intense as he dealt with the guilt and sadness that came with his sin. But it was through this trial, that he also was able to experience the depths of God's mercy.

1 Peter 1:3 (NLT) *"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation..."*

2 Peter 3:9 (NLT) *"The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent."*

Ephesians 2:4-5 (NLT) *"But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)"*

Psalms 86:5 (NLT) *"O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help."*

Lamentations 3:22-23 (NLT) *"The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning."*

1 John 1:9 (NLT) *"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."*

Matthew 9:13 (NLT) *"Then he added, 'Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.' For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.'"*

Titus 3:5 (NLT) *"...he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit."*

Isaiah 55:7 (NLT) *"Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously."*

Notes:

Reflection and Response from This Week's Lesson:

What's my take-away and how will I practice trusting God more through my custom-designed trials?
