

SHARE YOUR STORY

NO FILTERS JUST FAITH

**40-DAY DEVOTIONAL, JOURNAL
& SMALL GROUP GUIDE**

- PASTOR MARIO -

WEEK 2: OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES IN MY STORY

Every great story has moments of struggle, times when the hero faces obstacles, hardships, or unexpected detours. Our lives are no different. The journey of faith is not a smooth road; it is filled with trials that test our trust in God, challenges that push us beyond our limits, and seasons of doubt that make us question our path. Yet, it is often in these very struggles that God shapes us the most.

This week, as we explore the contention found in Devotional Days 8–14, we will reflect on the difficult parts of our stories, the failures, the pain, the disappointments, and the waiting seasons. Too often, we try to hide these parts or wish them away, but God does not waste anything. Even our hardest moments are being woven into His greater story of redemption.

The Bible is filled with accounts of people who had to face and overcome their own challenges. Joseph endured betrayal and imprisonment before stepping into his God-ordained purpose. Moses wrestled with self-doubt and the weight of leadership. Esther risked her life for the sake of her people. Paul faced persecution, beatings, and shipwrecks, yet he declared that God's grace was sufficient. Their stories remind us that difficulty does not mean defeat, and delay does not mean denial. God is at work, even in our struggles.

This week, we will learn to embrace our challenges, not as roadblocks but as opportunities for God to show His power in our weakness. We will see how God can turn our pain into purpose, our trials into testimonies, and our struggles into stepping stones toward greater faith.

PASTOR MARIO

Your story, with all its ups and downs, has value. Your scars are proof of survival, and your challenges are evidence of God's hand at work in your life.

As you read, reflect, and engage with this week's devotionals, ask yourself: What challenges in my story am I still wrestling with? How has God been present in my hardest moments? Am I willing to trust that even the painful parts of my journey have a purpose?

No challenge is too great for the God who holds your story. Let's walk this path together, embracing the truth that **our struggles do not define us, God's grace does.**

Day 8: The Stories We Tell Ourselves – Breaking Negative Narratives

2 CORINTHIANS 10:5 (NLT)

⁵ We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

The Power of Our Inner Narratives

Every day, we tell ourselves stories, stories about who we are, what we are capable of, and how the world perceives us. Some of these stories uplift and inspire, but others hold us back. The negative narratives, often shaped by past failures, rejection, or comparison, become prisons that keep us from stepping into the fullness of God's purpose.

Consider the Israelites who were delivered from Egypt but still saw themselves as slaves rather than as God's chosen people. Despite God's promises, they said, "We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them" (Numbers 13:33, NLT). Their perception of themselves shaped their reality, and as a result, many of them never entered the Promised Land.

Identifying Negative Narratives

Negative narratives are deceptive. They often disguise themselves as logic or realism. They sound like:

- *"I will always be a failure."*
- *"I'm not good enough."*

- “*Nothing ever works out for me.*”
- “*God can’t use someone like me.*”

These thoughts do not come from God. In fact, they are strongholds, lies the enemy plants to keep us from fulfilling our God-given destiny. But 2 Corinthians 10:5 reminds us that we have the power to demolish these strongholds by taking every thought captive and making it obedient to Christ.

Rewriting Our Inner Stories

To break free from negative narratives, we must intentionally rewrite them with God’s truth. Here’s how:

1. **Recognize the Lie** – Identify the negative thoughts that contradict God’s Word.
2. **Replace it with Truth** – Find scripture that speaks the opposite of the lie.
3. **Repeat the Truth** – Speak God’s Word over yourself daily.
4. **Rely on God’s Grace** – Trust that transformation is a process and that God is patient with you.

For example, if your inner narrative says, “*I am unworthy,*” replace it with **Psalm 139:14 (NLT):** “*Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.*” Let God’s truth shape your identity, not past wounds or failures.

Walking in God’s Truth

The greatest story ever told is the Gospel, the story of redemption, grace, and transformation. When Jesus encountered people, He rewrote their narratives. The woman at the well went from an outcast to an evangelist. Peter went from a denier to the foundation of the early church. Paul went from a persecutor to a preacher. Your story, too, can be rewritten by God’s grace.

Practical Application

1. Write down a negative thought you often struggle with.
2. Find a scripture that directly contradicts that thought.
3. Pray and ask God to help you believe His truth over the enemy’s lies.

4. Speak the scripture over yourself daily.
5. Surround yourself with godly voices who reinforce God's truth in your life.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some negative narratives I have believed about myself?
2. How have these narratives impacted my decisions and faith walk?
3. What does God's Word say about my identity in Christ?
4. How can I intentionally replace lies with God's truth?
5. Who in my life can hold me accountable for renewing my mind with scripture?

MEMORABLE QUOTE

The enemy knows he cannot change your destiny, so he tries to change your story.

A Prayer for Today

Father, I thank You for the power of Your Word that transforms my mind and heart. Forgive me for believing lies that have kept me bound in fear, doubt, and insecurity. Today, I surrender my thoughts to You. Help me to see myself as You see me, worthy, loved, and chosen. Replace my negative narratives with Your truth, and teach me to walk in the confidence of who I am in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Final Thought

The stories we tell ourselves shape our lives. When we allow God to rewrite our narratives with His truth, we step into the abundant life He has promised. Be intentional about speaking life over yourself, because the words you believe will determine the direction of your journey. Today is the day to break free from negative narratives and walk boldly in the story God is writing for you.

Day 9: Gethsemane Moments: When the Story Gets Hard

LUKE 22:41-42 (NLT)

⁴¹ He walked away, about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

The Weight of the Moment

Life is full of chapters, some filled with joy and celebration, and others that test our faith, endurance, and trust in God. One of the most powerful examples of such a moment in Scripture is Jesus' experience in Gethsemane. As He knelt to pray, He felt the full weight of the suffering that was ahead. He was not only facing physical pain but also the burden of carrying the sins of the world. In His anguish, He asked if there was another way, yet He ultimately surrendered to the Father's will.

We all face Gethsemane moments, seasons when life feels unbearable, and we wonder if we can go on. These moments may come in the form of loss, rejection, failure, or deep personal struggle. Like Jesus, we may cry out to God, asking for relief. But Gethsemane is not just a place of struggle; it is a place of surrender.

Surrendering in the Struggle

Surrender does not mean giving up, it means yielding to God's greater plan. When Jesus prayed, "Yet I want your will to be done, not mine," He modeled the ultimate act of trust. He acknowledged His pain but still submitted to the Father's perfect will.

How often do we resist surrender because we fear the unknown? We cling to our own desires, hoping that God will adjust His plan to fit our comfort. But faith requires trust, especially when we cannot see the outcome. Gethsemane teaches us that God's way, though sometimes painful, leads to the greatest glory.

Angels in the Garden

Luke's Gospel records that after Jesus prayed, "an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him" (Luke 22:43). Even in the most agonizing moment, God provided strength. He did not remove the suffering but gave Jesus the power to endure it.

In our Gethsemane moments, we may not see an angel appear visibly, but God always sends strength, through His Word, through the Holy Spirit, or through people who encourage us. He does not abandon us in the struggle; He walks with us through it.

The Other Side of Gethsemane

Gethsemane was not the end of Jesus' story. The suffering He endured led to the ultimate victory, our salvation. His resurrection three days later proved that pain and trials do not have the final say.

Your struggle is not the end of your story, either. God can bring beauty from ashes, strength from weakness, and joy from mourning. But first, we must endure our Gethsemane moments with faith, knowing that victory is on the other side.

Practical Application

1. **Pray Honestly:** Jesus did not hide His emotions from the Father. Be real with God about your struggles. He can handle your pain, questions, and doubts.
2. **Surrender Daily:** Each day, ask God to help you align your will with His. Surrender is not a one-time event but a daily choice.
3. **Look for God's Strength:** Pay attention to how God strengthens you in your Gethsemane moments. It may come through a scripture, a sermon, small group, a friend's encouragement, or an inner peace beyond understanding.

4. **Remember the Resurrection:** Whatever hardship you are facing, remind yourself that this is not the end. God is writing a greater story for your life.

Reflection Questions

1. What is my current Gethsemane moment? How is it challenging my faith?
2. Have I been resisting surrender in any area of my life? What is stopping me from fully trusting God?
3. How has God strengthened me in past struggles? How can I look for His strength in my current situation?
4. What would it look like for me to fully embrace God's will, even when it is difficult?

MEMORABLE QUOTE

Gethsemane is not where hope terminates,
but where faith is tried and tested.

A Prayer for Today

Father, I come to You in my Gethsemane moment, feeling the weight of my struggles. Like Jesus, I sometimes wish for a way out, but I also desire Your will above all. Strengthen me, Lord. Help me to surrender my fears and trust in Your perfect plan. Remind me that I am not alone and that You will never leave me. I trust that beyond this pain, there is purpose, and beyond this trial, there is triumph. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Final Thought

Hard moments are inevitable, but they do not define us. What defines us is how we respond, whether we choose faith over fear, surrender over control, and trust over doubt. Your Gethsemane moment is not where your story ends; it is where God's power begins to shine through you. Hold on, trust Him, and remember, resurrection always follows surrender.

Day 10: The Gift of Thorny Places – Strength Through Struggles

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10 (NLT)

⁹ Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. ¹⁰ That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Thorns That Shape Us

Life often presents us with difficulties that seem insurmountable, financial hardships, broken relationships, health challenges, or personal failures. These experiences can feel like thorny places, painful and unrelenting. But could it be that God allows these struggles to refine and strengthen us?

The apostle Paul knew this well. He spoke of a “thorn in the flesh,” something that troubled him deeply. He pleaded for God to remove it, yet God responded with a powerful truth: “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul realized that his thorn was not a hindrance but a divine tool shaping him for God’s purposes.

What if our struggles serve a higher purpose? What if our thorny places are meant to grow our faith and reliance on God?

Thorns Teach Dependence on God

Struggles have a way of breaking our self-sufficiency. When life is easy, we may forget how much we need God. But when we walk through difficult seasons, we find ourselves crying out to Him, seeking His strength and guidance.

Consider the Israelites in the wilderness. Their hardships forced them to rely on God for daily provision. Manna fell from heaven, water flowed from a rock, and their clothes did not wear out. These difficulties reminded them that God alone was their provider.

When we face thorny places, they push us closer to the Father. We come to understand that His grace is enough, that His presence sustains us. It is in our weakness that we truly experience His strength.

Thorns Refine Our Character

A garden without thorns may be beautiful, but it is incomplete. Thorns serve a purpose, they protect, define, and refine. Likewise, our struggles refine our character.

JAMES 1:2-4 (NLT)

² Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³ For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴ So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

Just as gold is purified in fire, we are refined through struggles. God uses our hardships to mold us into the image of Christ. Think about Joseph. Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, and imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit, his life was full of thorny places. But through it all, God was shaping him for a greater purpose. In the end, Joseph became a leader who saved nations. His suffering was not in vain.

When we endure trials, we become stronger, wiser, and more compassionate. Our faith deepens, and our testimonies become a beacon of hope for others.

Thorns Prepare Us for Greater Purpose

Jesus wore a crown of thorns on His way to the cross. Those thorns symbolized pain, rejection, and sacrifice. Yet, through His suffering, salvation was made available to all.

Sometimes, our struggles are not just about us. They prepare us to minister to others, to walk alongside those who are hurting, and to be a source of encouragement. Our thorny places make us more effective in our calling.

Look at Paul. His thorn kept him humble and dependent on God. Rather than being a stumbling block, it became a testimony of God's power. Paul's ministry thrived because he embraced his weakness, knowing that God's strength was perfected in it.

What if your current struggle is preparing you for something greater? What if God is using this season to equip you for a calling you have yet to walk into?

Practical Application

1. **Identify Your Thorns:** Reflect on the areas of struggle in your life. Are there hardships that seem to persist? Acknowledge them before God.
2. **Seek God's Perspective:** Instead of asking, "Why me?" ask, "What are You teaching me, Lord?" Shift your focus from the pain to the purpose.
3. **Lean into God's Strength:** Pray daily for His grace to sustain you. When you feel weak, declare His promise: "When I am weak, then I am strong."
4. **Use Your Struggles for Good:** Encourage someone else going through a similar challenge. Your testimony may be the encouragement they need.
5. **Trust the Process:** Know that God is working, even when you don't understand. Every thorny place has the potential to produce growth and transformation.

Reflection Questions

1. What thorny places in my life have I struggled with the most?
2. How has God used hardships to strengthen my faith?

3. Are there areas where I need to shift my perspective from pain to purpose?
4. How can my struggles be a testimony to others?
5. In what ways can I lean into God's strength more deeply in this season?

MEMORABLE QUOTE

The presence of a thorn is no indicator of the absence of God, but rather it is the tool of alignment.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I come before You with the struggles that weigh heavy on my heart. Sometimes, the thorny places feel overwhelming, but I trust that You have a purpose for them. Thank You for reminding me that Your grace is enough. Help me to lean into Your strength and find joy in the midst of trials. Shape my heart, refine my character, and use my story for Your glory. I surrender my struggles to You, knowing that You are working all things for my good. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Final Thought

Struggles are not a sign of God's absence but of His refining presence. Every thorny place we walk through is an opportunity to experience His grace, grow in faith, and step into greater purpose. Rather than running from the struggles, let us embrace them, knowing that God's power is perfected in our weakness. Trust the process, lean on His strength, and allow your story to be a testimony of His faithfulness.

Day 11: Conquering Fear and Doubt in Our Story

2 TIMOTHY 1:7 (NLT)

⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

The Reality of Fear and Doubt

Fear and doubt are common emotions that everyone faces. They often arise when we encounter uncertainty, challenges, or when our past failures whisper lies that make us question our abilities. Even in biblical times, great men and women of faith struggled with fear and doubt.

Consider Moses. When God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, his first response was one of fear: “Who am I to appear before Pharaoh?” (Exodus 3:11). Gideon also doubted his strength when God called him to deliver Israel, saying, “But Lord, how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe, and I am the least in my entire family!” (Judges 6:15). Despite these initial doubts, God reassured them and equipped them for their callings.

Recognizing the Source of Fear and Doubt

Fear and doubt do not originate from God. Instead, they often stem from past experiences, negative thoughts, or the enemy’s deception. The enemy seeks to paralyze us with fear so that we never step into the fullness of God’s plan.

Jesus frequently addressed fear among His disciples. When Peter stepped out of the boat onto the water, he walked on the waves toward Jesus. But the moment he focused on the storm instead of Jesus, fear took over, and he began to sink. Jesus immediately reached out and said, “Why did you doubt me?” (Matthew

14:31). The same applies to us, when we focus on our fears instead of God's faithfulness, doubt begins to creep in.

Overcoming Fear and Doubt with Faith

Overcoming fear and doubt requires trust in God's promises. He has given us His Word to counter every lie that fear whispers. The key to conquering fear is faith: faith in God's character, His power, and His love for us.

Trust God's Promises

1. ISAIAH 41:10 (NLT)

¹⁰ Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God.

2. Take Small Steps of Faith

Courage isn't the absence of fear; it's moving forward despite it. Just as David stepped forward to face Goliath, we must take steps of faith despite our doubts.

3. Speak Life Over Your Fears

PROVERBS 18:21 (NLT)

²¹ The tongue can bring death or life.

Speak God's truth over your situation.

4. Surround Yourself with Encouragers

Find faith-filled people who will uplift and remind you of God's promises when fear tries to take hold.

Practical Application

- Identify one fear or doubt that has been holding you back.
- Find a scripture that addresses that fear and write it down where you can see it daily.
- Take one small step of faith this week in an area where fear has kept you stagnant.

- Share your journey with a trusted friend or mentor who can pray with you and encourage you.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some fears or doubts that have held me back from stepping into God's calling?
2. How have past experiences shaped my perspective on fear and faith?
3. What steps can I take to trust God more in areas where doubt is creeping in?
4. Who in my life can encourage and support me as I face my fears?

MEMORABLE QUOTE

Fear may visit, but it does not have the right to stay where faith resides.

A Prayer for Today

Heavenly Father, I come before You acknowledging the fears and doubts that have held me back. Thank You for reminding me that You have not given me a spirit of fear but of power, love, and self-discipline. Help me to walk in faith, trusting Your promises over the whispers of fear. Strengthen my heart and guide my steps as I move forward in obedience. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Final Thought

Fear and doubt may be real, but they are not final. God has given you the tools to overcome them and walk boldly in faith. Step forward with confidence, knowing that the One who calls you is faithful to equip and sustain you.

Day 12: From Setback to Comeback

ROMANS 8:28 (NLT)

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

The Unexpected Roadblocks

Life is full of unexpected twists and turns. Just when we think we have it all figured out, a setback arrives, throwing our plans into disarray. A lost job, a failed relationship, a health crisis—these obstacles can leave us feeling defeated, questioning whether we will ever move forward. However, the Bible teaches us that God can turn our setbacks into comebacks. What seems like a dead end can be a divine detour leading us to something greater.

Biblical Examples of Comebacks

The Bible is filled with stories of individuals who faced setbacks but experienced powerful comebacks because of God's faithfulness. Take Joseph, for example. Betrayed by his own brothers and sold into slavery, he spent years in hardship. But through God's providence, he was eventually placed in a position of authority in Egypt, saving millions during a famine (Genesis 50:20).

Consider Job. He lost everything—his wealth, health, and family. Yet, because of his faithfulness, God restored him with even greater blessings than before (Job 42:10).

Even Peter, who denied Jesus three times, experienced redemption when Jesus reinstated him, calling him to feed His sheep (Matthew 16:18).

These stories remind us that failure is never final when God is in control.

The Purpose Behind Setbacks

1. **Setbacks Develop Character:** Trials refine us, teaching patience, perseverance, and faith. They push us to rely on God rather than our own strength.

JAMES 1:2-4 (NLT)

² Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³ For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴ So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

2. **Setbacks Redirect Our Path:** Sometimes, God allows a closed door to guide us toward His better plan. Paul, for instance, intended to preach in Asia, but God redirected him to Macedonia instead, leading to the spread of the gospel (Acts 16:6-10).
3. **Setbacks Reveal God's Power:** Our weakest moments provide the perfect backdrop for God's strength to be displayed.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10 (NLT)

⁹ Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. ¹⁰ That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Steps to Turning a Setback into a Comeback

MICAH 7:8 (NLT)

⁸ Do not gloat over me, my enemies! For though I fall, I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light.

1. **Trust in God's Sovereignty** – Believe that God is in control, even when circumstances seem out of hand (Proverbs 3:5-6).
2. **Seek God in Prayer** – Instead of complaining, take your burdens to God, seeking His guidance and wisdom (Philippians 4:6-7).

3. **Learn from the Experience** – Ask, “What is God trying to teach me through this?” Every setback has a lesson that prepares you for the future.
4. **Keep Moving Forward** – Refuse to stay stuck in failure. God calls us to rise again (Micah 7:8).
5. **Encourage Others with Your Story** – Your comeback will be a testimony to someone else who is struggling (Revelation 12:11).

Practical Application

1. Identify a setback in your life that you are currently facing or have faced in the past.
2. Write down three lessons you learned from that experience.
3. Reflect on how God has used or can use that situation for His glory.
4. Share your testimony with someone who may need encouragement.
5. Meditate on Romans 8:28 daily, reminding yourself that God is working everything for good.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever seen a setback in your life turn into a blessing? How did it change your perspective?
2. What is one fear that is preventing you from stepping into your comeback?
3. How can you trust God more when facing challenges?
4. What practical steps can you take today to move forward from your setback?

MEMORABLE QUOTE

God's delays are not denials;
His detours are not dead ends.

A Prayer for Today

Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your unfailing love and guidance. Even in my setbacks, I trust that You are working all things for my good. Help me to remain steadfast in faith, seeing obstacles as opportunities for growth. Strengthen me when I feel weak, and remind me that my story is not over. Turn my trials into testimonies and my setbacks into comebacks. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Final Thought

Setbacks are not signs of failure; they are setups for something greater. When you place your trust in God, He can take what was meant for harm and use it for good. No matter how difficult your current season may seem, remember that God specializes in turning trials into triumphs. Your best days are ahead, so keep moving forward in faith!

Day 13: Trusting God When the Ending is Unclear

PSALM 32:8 (NLT)

⁸The Lord says, ‘I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.’

The Uncertainty of Life's Story

Life often feels like a story unfolding without a clear ending. We love books and movies because they have closure, loose ends tied up, conflicts resolved, and happy endings secured. However, real life does not always provide such clarity. There are moments when we stand at a crossroads, unsure of which path to take, feeling like the final chapter has not yet been written.

Perhaps you are facing a season of uncertainty, waiting on a job opportunity, praying for healing, or seeking direction for your family. In these moments, it is easy to feel anxious and afraid. We want assurance that everything will turn out well, yet God often calls us to walk by faith, not by sight.

Biblical Examples of Uncertain Endings

The Bible is filled with stories of individuals who had to trust God without knowing the ending.

- **Abraham** was called to leave his homeland without knowing his destination (Genesis 12:1-4). He followed God's call, trusting that the journey, though uncertain, had a divine purpose.
- **Joseph** endured betrayal, slavery, and imprisonment before seeing the fulfillment of God's promise (Genesis 37-50). During his years of

hardship, he had no certainty of how his story would unfold, yet he remained faithful.

- **Mary, the mother of Jesus**, received the angel's message that she would bear the Son of God, but she had no details about how her life would be shaped by that calling (Luke 1:26-38).

In each of these stories, uncertainty was a necessary step in God's plan. Trusting God meant moving forward despite the unknown.

Faith That Walks in the Dark

Trusting God when the ending is unclear requires a faith that moves forward, even in the dark. The enemy wants us to believe that uncertainty equals abandonment, but Scripture teaches that God is always near, even when the road is unclear.

Faith is not about seeing the whole path but about taking the next step. Consider a person walking with a lantern in the night. The lantern only lights a few feet ahead, but that light is enough to keep moving. God's guidance works in much the same way, He reveals enough for us to take the next step, but He asks us to trust Him with the rest.

God's Promises Amidst Uncertainty

God has given us promises to hold onto in times of uncertainty:

JEREMIAH 29:11 (NLT)

¹¹ “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

ROMANS 8:28 (NLT)

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

ISAIAH 41:10 (NLT)

¹⁰ “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.”

These scriptures remind us that even when we cannot see the outcome, God is already ahead of us, preparing the way.

Practical Application

1. **Acknowledge Your Fears** – It’s okay to admit that uncertainty is difficult. Bring your fears before God in prayer and ask Him for peace.
2. **Remember Past Faithfulness** – Reflect on times when God has been faithful in your life. Let those moments strengthen your trust.
3. **Stay in the Word** – Fill your heart with God’s promises. Meditate on scriptures that remind you of His sovereignty.
4. **Take One Step at a Time** – Instead of worrying about the entire path, focus on taking the next faithful step.
5. **Surround Yourself with Encouragement** – Seek support from a community of believers, like a small group or serving team, who can pray with you and remind you of God’s faithfulness.

Reflection Questions

1. Can I recall a time when I had to trust God without knowing the outcome? How did He show Himself faithful?
2. What fears arise in my heart when I face uncertainty? How can I surrender them to God?
3. Which of God’s promises speaks most to me right now? How can I apply it to my situation?
4. Who in my life encourages me to trust God? How can I be that person for someone else?
5. How would my faith be strengthened if I truly believed that God is in control, even when you can’t see the ending?

MEMORABLE QUOTE

Faith is not knowing what the future holds
but knowing who holds the future.

A Prayer for Today

Heavenly Father, I come before You with an open heart, acknowledging that I often struggle with uncertainty. I want to trust You, even when I cannot trace You, when I cannot see the full picture. Remind me that You are sovereign and that Your plans for me are good. Strengthen my faith to walk forward, step by step, knowing that You are leading me. Help me to rest in Your promises and to find peace in Your presence. Thank You for always being faithful. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Final Thought

Life is a journey of faith, and the path is often unclear. But God, the Author of our stories, has already seen the ending. Trust Him with the unknown, believing that His plans are for your good. Walk forward in faith, knowing that even in uncertainty, He is with you, guiding you every step of the way.

Day 14: Reflection & Prayer

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23 (NLT)

²² The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. ²³ Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.

Looking Back to Move Forward

We've spent the past week uncovering the challenges in our stories. We've confronted the fear of vulnerability, wrestled with the pain of our past, and embraced the reality that every challenge has purpose. Today, as we reflect on Days 7-13, we step back to see the bigger picture, how God is weaving every detail of our story together for good.

So often, we focus on individual moments of pain, failure, or uncertainty. But when we zoom out, we realize that every challenge has contributed to our growth. What once seemed like detours were actually divine appointments. What we thought were setbacks were setups for something greater. This is the beauty of reflection, it allows us to see God's fingerprints on every page of our story.

The Nuggets We Might Have Missed

1. Struggles Are Invitations to Trust

Every time we face trials, we have a choice: to see them as obstacles or as invitations to trust God more deeply. Challenges strip away our illusions of control and remind us of our need for Him. In reflecting on our hardships, we should ask: *What did this season teach me about trust?*

Peter's moment of walking on water wasn't just about the miracle, it was about trust. He walked as long as his eyes were fixed on Jesus. The

moment he focused on the wind and waves, he sank. Many times, we sink in our struggles because we fixate on the storm rather than the Savior. Yet, even in those moments, Jesus reaches out and pulls us back up.

Nugget of Truth: Every challenge is an opportunity to deepen our dependence on God.

2. Brokenness is the Gateway to Breakthrough

Often, the places where we have been the most wounded are the same places God uses for the greatest ministry. When we reflect on our past pains, we see that they were not wasted. God redeems every tear, every scar, every heartbreak.

The story of Joseph is a perfect example. Betrayed by his brothers, thrown into a pit, and unjustly imprisoned, yet, in the end, he could say, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good” (Genesis 50:20, NLT). His suffering prepared him to step into his purpose.

How does this apply to us? Perhaps what you thought disqualified you is actually what qualifies you to help others. Your wounds are not the end of your story; they are the places where God’s power is made perfect.

Nugget of Truth: Your scars are not signs of defeat but evidence of God’s redemptive work.

3. God’s Silence is Not His Absence

One of the hardest seasons to endure is when God seems silent. We pray, we wait, and we hear nothing. But looking back, we often realize that His silence was not rejection, it was preparation.

David was anointed as king but spent years in the wilderness before stepping into his calling. The silence was not punishment; it was training. Jesus, too, experienced silence on the cross when He cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46, NLT). Yet, that moment of seeming abandonment led to the greatest victory of all, our redemption.

Nugget of Truth: God’s silence is often His way of teaching us to walk by faith, not by sight.

Practical Application: Putting Reflection into Action

- **Write down** the biggest challenges you've faced in your journey. Now, write what you've learned from them.
- **Identify** where God was working, even when you couldn't see Him at the time.
- **Share** your story with someone who might need encouragement. Sometimes, the reflection of our past pain is the answer to someone's present struggle.
- **Pray** for insight. Ask God to reveal areas where you still need to trust Him with your story.

Reflection Questions

1. How has God used a difficult season in my life for my growth?
2. What would I say to my younger self about trusting God in hard times?
3. Can I identify a moment where what seemed like a loss was actually God's protection or redirection?
4. Are there areas of my life where I still struggle to see how God is working? How can I surrender them today?

MEMORABLE QUOTE

God never wastes a battle, every struggle is a chapter in the story of His faithfulness.

A Prayer for Today

Father, thank You for every page of my story, the good, the painful, the uncertain. As I reflect on my journey, help me to see Your hand in every moment. Teach me to trust You when I don't understand, to embrace my challenges as opportunities for growth, and to use my testimony for Your glory. Strengthen my faith to believe that nothing in my life is wasted. I surrender my story to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Final Thought

Your story is still unfolding, and God is not finished with you yet. Every challenge has shaped you into who you are today. Take time to reflect, thank God for the journey, and step into the next chapter with faith.

SHARE YOUR STORY

SMALL GROUP TEACHING

Week 2: Overcoming the Challenges in My Story

Watch Week 2 Teaching Video: ShareYourStory.world/Teaching

Introduction

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 (NLT)

⁹ Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.

Overcoming Challenges In My Story Requires:

1. _____ : Seeing My Challenges Through God’s Eyes

GENESIS 50:20 (NLT)

²⁰ “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.”

2. _____ : Pushing Through the Pain

GALATIANS 6:9 (NLT)

⁹ So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.

3. _____ : Finding Meaning in the Mess

ESTHER 4:14 (NLT)

¹⁴ “Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?”

Conclusion

2 CORINTHIANS 4:17 (NLT)

17 For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

Teaching Notes

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. What is a challenge in your life that initially seemed like a setback but later revealed a greater purpose?
2. How can changing your perspective help you overcome a current struggle?
3. Why do you think God allows difficulties in our lives?
4. How can we encourage one another to remain steadfast during tough times?
5. In what ways do you see your struggles shaping your purpose?
6. How can sharing your struggles help someone else going through a similar experience?

Discussion Notes
