

a Bible study on bringing Christ into the chaos

NAVIGATING THE CHAOS



Overview:

Jesus says to His disciples, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) Jesus didn’t make this promise to His disciples in the middle of a dinner party where they were simply relaxing and enjoying each other’s company. He says this as part of His final discourse to His disciples when He is preparing them for His pending betrayal, by one of His closest 12 disciples – Judas – His suffering, death and resurrection. It was most likely a very disorienting meal together, and as we can read in the Gospels, chaos ensued amongst the disciples.

How many times have you been in a very disorienting, chaotic season in life? For some, these seasons seem like a normal part of life, for others, they seem to happen so infrequently that they simply don’t know how to handle the chaos.

This Bible study has been prepared as an opportunity to dive into the Old and New Testament Scripture to further understand, experience and live out God’s promise of presence, peace and strength in His Son Jesus Christ. Chaotic seasons, trying seasons, tribulation and turmoil will be something each of us experiences as disciples of Christ. However, each is an opportunity to *seek Him first*, to learn *devotion and obedience to His Word*, to *love and serve others in our life*, and through the experience, be *discipled and disciple others*.

This participant’s guide has been prepared to be used with the videos of Pastor Brian and Pastor Randy. As you experience this study, we would invite you to share your experience on social media tagging Gloria Dei (@gdlchouston) and using #NavigatingtheChaos. We pray for our Savior’s peace and strength as you experience *Navigating the Chaos* as His disciple – not alone, but in His presence and peace!

Session 1: Bear with one another

Galatians 6:1-10

Introduction:

The end of Paul's letter to the Galatians is a great, pastoral, farewell. He's encouraging them to put into practice the very things he's been writing to them. As we dive into this passage, it would do us well to consider how we can apply it in our own circumstances, but especially in times of struggle. For Paul, the Body of Christ, the family of God, is an opportunity for Christ to carry out His promise that He will never leave or forsake us.

Engage: Galatians 6:1-10

6:1-2 - None of us is supposed to do this walk alone. At some point I'm the strong one, at some point you are.

6:6 - Paul uses this inter-personal relationship once again showing the disciple/discipler relationship being one where both engage, model and challenge each other. Sharing what we've been taught, or what we've experienced is a great opportunity to *bear with one another* as the Body of Christ.

6:9-10 - Throughout Scripture, struggle/pain/trials are referred to as *seasons*. Even here, Paul alludes to the concept as season. This creates a sense of urgency for us as disciples of Christ – we don't want to lose, miss or waste the opportunities we have to share the love, mercy and grace of Christ in the midst of great struggles.

Model:

1. How do you define the difference between sympathy and empathy? When do you find it the easiest to show either?

2. Why is it that times of crises usually lead to great acts of service and love to one another, but after just a few days of "normalcy" it seems we forget about those same great acts of service?
3. Pastor Brian shared a story of his small group, co-workers and family stepping up to love his family through Victoria's pregnancy with Esther and Naomi.
 - a. When have you experienced others bearing the load of your burdens?
 - b. What impact has that had on you since?

Challenge:

1. What are 3 ways you can support those in your household today, or this week?
2. In your circle of friends, what struggles are others facing that you might be able to offer support?
3. As you consider your neighbors, what are struggles or issues you may have noticed? Is there some way you could offer support to help them?

Next Steps:

1. Seek to offer support and encouragement to those in your household, your friends, and/or neighbors in areas they are currently struggling.
2. Read Galatians 6:1-10 every day for the next 7 days and write a short paragraph of reflection as you read this passage each day.
3. Pray for the strength to provide encouragement and support for somebody, as well as strength to ask for support and encouragement from those God has placed in your life.

Session 2: How to Fly Above the Storm

Isaiah 40:21-31

Introduction:

All Christians experience storm in their lives, physical, emotional and even spiritual. Moving forward in faith in Jesus Christ is not about avoiding, ignoring, and go around these storms, but instead facing these storms with our strength in Jesus Christ.

Engage: Isaiah 40:21-31

Context of Isaiah 40

The prophet Isaiah is writing words of hope and strength for God's people in the midst of the decline of Israel. Assyrian army conquers the world, including Israel, God's people. Chapters 1-39 talk about the coming decline; war; being conquered; scattered

Chapter 40 represents a shift away from the gloom and doom and towards God's faithfulness and work. Look at the following verses more closely:

40:28 – God doesn't grow tired nor weary. Isaiah compares the strength and energy of God to that of youths – what our culture and society often thinks of as those with the most energy! Even youths will grow tired and weary compared to God's never ceasing energy.

40:31 – Renewal in strength and peace doesn't come from working harder, or even ignoring the struggles we face. It comes from trusting in our Lord, in *seeking Christ first in all things*.

Model:

Pastor Randy discussed what happens when eagles have the opportunity to experience storms– while all other birds fly away, eagles fly towards the storm. The updrafts are able to take them to new heights, and eagles look forward to the new experience this provides. They ride the winds and can go as high as 10,000 feet in the air! Compare that to vultures which eat on dead things that they can easily access on the ground. Vultures only look out for themselves.

1. When have you experienced people living in faith like eagles – approaching the storms of their life and learning to grow through that experience? When have you approached a storm of life like an eagle?

2. When have you experienced people living in faith like vultures – avoiding or ignoring the situation? Being opportunistic and only looking out for themselves instead trying to rise above the situation? When have you approached life like a vulture?

3. Where are you stumbling? Where do you worry?

- a. Income? Job?
- b. Kids / education
- c. GDLC Church community
- d. Stuck in the house all day every day. Kind of fun at first. Not so much anymore.

Challenge:

God has given you the gift of each day. Where has He given you strength to face the challenges of the day?

Practice these faith-growing opportunities in your life.

- Spend time in His Word of truth and grace through daily devotion. Take just a couple minutes every day to pray and thank God for His blessings in life.
- Choose your words carefully. As you reflect on a situation, how can you help bring light to the situation?
- Is there somebody you can connect with that can encourage you and remind you of God's blessings every day?

Next Steps:

- Share with others what Isaiah 40:28-31 means to you. You might give hope and strength to someone who needs it!
- Memorize Isaiah 40:30-31. Keep it in front of you every day.
- Look for ways every day where God is giving you strength to endure. Journal that and turn it into a prayer of thanks to God.

Session 3: Where Does Help Come From?

Psalm 121

Introduction:

This psalm was part of the worship and religious life of the Israelite people for centuries and was part of the collection known as the *Psalms of Ascent*. Psalm 91 would have been one of the psalms that travelers would sing and pray as they literally ascended and walked up into Jerusalem. The psalms also turn our eyes up towards God to see His presence and faithfulness in our lives, instead of looking to the false gods and idols we often look to in times of struggle.

Engage: Psalm 121

121:1-2. The psalmist is really speaking to the false gods, idols and securities we place in our lives with verse 1. The hills were often seen as the place of the gods, and as the traveler would have ascended to Jerusalem they would have seen altars and shrines to other gods.

121:3-5. Again, the psalmist shows God's truth and authority over all the other false gods and idols we often turn to. He isn't a talisman we keep in our pocket, or a part of creation that has no power in and of itself. He is the Creator, the One who is in authority over all things.

121:7-8. As the psalmist has stripped away our false idols, gods and securities, one could expect some disorientation. We like to think God is our lead and focus, but as we reflect in this psalm, He's more of a strawman for us than truly our Lord, our Savior, our God. Yet, in His grace and mercy, He still protects, guards and leads us every step of the way.

Model:

If somebody were to observe your life, without any knowledge of who you are, what would they perceive are the idols you turn to? Consider your routine: what are things you cannot, and will not, go without through the day?

If somebody were to observe your life, what would you want them to see you turn to every day?

As you consider your family, circle of friends, co-workers, etc...who are 2-3 people that model for you a seemingly strong trust and faith in the work of God in their lives? What have you observed about their life and how they operate day to day? What difference do you notice about them that you feel might be lacking in your own life?

Challenge:

The reality is that our behavior, or anyone else's, only tells a portion of the story. So, instead of simply observing, take the opportunity to truly learn. Have a conversation with the person/people that models a strong trust and faith in God.

Change up your routine. What are 3 things you can change/replace in your daily routine that would lead you back to God in His Word and prayer?

Start every day this next week with Psalm 121. Speak the psalm out loud. Do it with those in your household.

Next Steps:

1. Set up a time to talk with the person who models strength in faith and trust of God.
2. Identify and share your 3 routine change-ups with a family member or friend who will lovingly hold you accountable.
3. Set a time to read Psalm 121 together, out loud, as a family.

Session 4: Rejoicing Always?

Philippians 4:1-9

Introduction:

Paul is writing this letter to the Philippian church while he is in prison. By the time he wrote Philippians, Paul has suffered a great deal, not just with this imprisonment, but throughout his ministry. Yet, as he writes in this letter, none of these experiences take away the joy he has in Jesus Christ. This doesn't mean Paul didn't struggle with the trials he faced. His faith in Christ Jesus, as His disciple, strengthened him to face whatever trials came his way...and to face those trials with joy.

Engage: Philippians 4:1-9

4:1 – Paul starts this section with “Therefore...” It’s important to go back to the previous section to connect context and content for what follows. No sooner does he write that the Philippians are his “joy and crown”, he begins calling people out for fighting!

4:2 - Euodia and Syntyche – Paul pleads that these two people agree. Imagine fighting with someone else and having your names written down for all time...yikes! This certainly puts into perspective how important it is to resolve disagreements among the family of God in Christ Jesus.

4:4-6 - Rejoice! Paul repeats himself to highlight the importance of what is to follow. Anxiety robs us of joy and peace, so Paul encourages us to not be anxious and gives practical steps of how to do so in faith. He encourages to turn to Christ in

- prayer and petition
- thanksgiving
- making known our request to God

4:7-8 – In turning to our Savior Jesus Christ, in *seeking Him first in all things*, Paul outlines in verse 6 that we receive *peace*. When we turn from focusing on our struggle and turn towards focusing on Jesus Christ, we receive peace in every circumstance.

Model:

Pastor Randy share the ways that God brought him through difficult moments in his life: struggling with identity in Christ as a young adult, the loss of his twins during his wife's pregnancy, the death of his father, and the temptation to give up in his calling in ministry because of the stress, pressures and anxieties of life. What are some of the struggles you have faced that God has faithfully brought you through?

Joy is about facing every struggle, trial and temptation knowing that God is at work in your life, even in the hardest of struggles.

When have you approached a struggle without joy and thanksgiving? How did that impact the relationship you had with those trying to walk with you and encourage you in that struggle?

Pastor Randy referenced the following quote:

Brokenness is when you realize God is all you have

Hope is when you realize God is all you need

Joy is when you realize God is all you want

What do you think about that quote?

Challenge:

Honestly reflect on where you are in your walk of faith as a disciple...are you broken? Hopeful? Joyful? Why?

What is a way to remind yourself, and others, that we need to turn to joy in Christ?

What is one situation you are facing in your life today that you can do as Paul calls us to do: turn to Christ in "prayer, supplication, and with thanksgiving making known your request to God".

Next Steps:

1. Spend time in prayer this week living out Philippians 4:1-9.
2. Identify and connect with one person that you feel could be encouraged by what you have learned from this study.
3. Share your experience with *Navigating the Chaos* with Gloria Dei on Facebook/Instagram @gdlchouston; #navigatingthechaos

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