

**IF YOU WANT TO
WALK ON WATER
YOU'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THE
BOAT**

Session Five:
Good News for
Cave Dwellers

Good News for Cave Dwellers

Sometimes you are in a cave and no human action is able to get you out. There is something you can't fix, can't heal, or can't escape, and all you can do is trust God. Finding ultimate refuge in God means you become so immersed in his presence, so convinced of his goodness, so devoted to his lordship that you find even the cave is a perfectly safe place to be because he is there with you.

John Ortbera

Questions to Think About

1. Compared with toddlers, who don't seem to mind failure – such as being misunderstood as they learn to talk, and falling and bumping into things as they learn to walk – how do adults tend to view failure?
2. When people experience failure in their lives, how do they typically respond?
3. What aspect of failure is most difficult for you?
4. What enables you to move beyond a failure?

Video Highlights

1. Many Christians avoid talking about failure or times of “being in the cave.” Why?
2. What effect does the common response of withdrawing or protecting ourselves from failure have on our ability to keep growing and risking?
3. What is it about being in the cave that allows God to do some of his best work there?
4. When we are living in the cave, what does taking action accomplish? What makes it difficult for us to take action?

Large Group Exploration

David's Experience in the Cave

There are many parallels between the life of David, one of the most adventurous men who ever lived, and our lives today. At first, as the Bible records in 1 Samuel 16:1-18:7, it seemed everything David touched worked well:

- In the presence of his brothers and father, David was anointed by Samuel to become the next king of Israel.
- As a youthful shepherd, David volunteered to fight Goliath, a huge warrior who challenged not only the Israelites but God himself, and David succeeded.
- David was given a high rank in the army because he successfully did everything King Saul sent him to do. He was viewed as a hero who had done mightier deeds than King Saul.

But then events in David's life changed dramatically. Let's see what happened.

1. After experiencing a string of personal successes, David experienced a series of devastating losses. Read the following Scripture passages and write down some of the losses David faced.

Scripture	David's Losses
1 Samuel 18:8-11; 19:1-13, 18-20; 20:1;1, 25:1	
1 Samuel 19:1-3; 20:30-42; <u>31:1-3</u>	
1 Samuel 21:10-15	
1 Samuel 22:1-2	
1 Samuel 23:19-29	

2. Describe the relationship David had with God when all was going well in his life. [see 1 Samuel 17:32-37; 18:12-14]

3. After facing the losses and difficulties outlined in question 1 [which are far from complete], how did David respond towards God? [see 1 Samuel 30:3-6]

4. It's not easy to face the pain and discouragement of failure and adversity. There were times in David's life when he felt utterly destroyed. His response to one of those times is found in Psalm 142, "A *maskil* of David. When he was in the cave. A prayer." Let's look at this psalm, which reveals the cry of David's heart, and see how he faced his situation and found a way to go on.
 - a. What do we learn from Psalm 142:1-2 about David's communication with God?

 - b. In the first part of verse 3, what did David affirm about God?

 - c. In verses 4-6, how did David describe his situation? What did he count on God to do for him? Is it any different for us when we are in the cave?

 - d. What was David's hope and request in verse 7?

Did You Know?

According to Old Testament scholars, the book of Psalms contains different kinds of psalms: psalms of thanksgiving, psalms of wisdom, psalms about enthronement concerning the king, and so on. But the most common category is the psalm of lament. The most frequent psalms are those of complaint to God!

Small Group Exploration

Point to Ponder

Optimism requires a belief that things will in fact get better for you and me. Hope includes the psychological advantages of optimism but is rooted in something deeper. When we hope, we believe that God is at work to redeem all things *regardless of how things happen to be turning out for us today*.

John Ortberg

God: Our Refuge and Hope

We can't fix, heal, or escape all of our bad situations. Relationships fall apart. Marriages fail. Children disappoint. Illnesses debilitate. Jobs terminate. Our deepest dreams and desires remain unfulfilled. The list could go on and on. So sometimes there's no way out of the cave; we will be there for a while. But during those times, we can find refuge and hope in God. He understands storms and cave-dwelling firsthand. He is the God of encouragement. He is the God of power who never ceases to redeem all things. So let's investigate a few highlights from Scripture that reveal the hope God offers.

1. The following Scripture passages give us a basis for placing our hope in God.
 - a. What about God gives us reason to hope? [see Psalm 62:5-8]

 - b. What aspect of God's eternal character gives us reason to hope? [see Psalm 89:1-2]

 - c. What do Philippians 3:12-14; 4:13 emphasize?

2. Hope got Peter out of the boat. Trust in God held Peter up as he walked on the water. Then fear conquered him; he shifted his attention from Jesus to the storm and began to sink. Peter's ability to water-walk hinged on whether he focused on the Saviour or on the storm. Let's consider what God says about keeping our eyes focused on him so that we can gain hope in the midst of our most desperate situations.
 - a. Isaiah 26:3 and Romans 12:2 give us essential instruction regarding how we need to use our minds. What do these passages teach us about where we focus our minds?
 - b. In *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*, John [Ortberg](#) emphasizes that our ability to live in hope – to remain focused on Christ during the storm – is largely dependent on what we feed our minds. How and with what does God want to feed our minds? And what are we to do with what we have learned? [see Philippians 4:8-9]
 - c. In Psalm 119, the psalmist wells up with love for the Scriptures. Read verses 11 and 97-104 and explain why it is so important to meditate on Scripture.

Jesus Really Understands

Jesus, the Son of David, experienced challenging, painful losses while living on earth. In fact, many of his losses parallel David's losses, and our losses as well. Note some of the ways in which Jesus had firsthand experience with the types of losses we suffer.

David Suffered Losses	Jesus Suffered Losses
Was heralded as brave, courageous, successful man [1 Samuel 18:6-8, 12-16] and loved by many people. Then he was forced to flee for his life from Saul [1 Samuel 19:18]	Was in heaven, at the right hand of God the Father, <u>honored</u> by the heavenly hosts. But because of the need to redeem humankind, Jesus came to earth as a human being [Philippians 2:5-11]
David was no doubt hungry and thirsty when he lived in the desert wilderness [1 Samuel 23:14-15]	Jesus was hungry after fasting in the wilderness for forty days [Matthew 4:1-2]
David's life was threatened numerous times [1 Samuel 18:10-11; 19:9-16]	People threatened Jesus and wanted to kill him [Mark 3:6; Luke 19:47]
For years David moved from place to place, not having a real home [1 Samuel 19:18; 20:1; 21:10; 27:4]	Jesus travelled from place to place, without a real home in which to lay his head [Matthew 8:20]
David's best friend, Jonathan, was killed [1 Samuel 31:2]	Jesus' beloved friend, John the Baptist, was killed [Matthew 14:6-11]
David's friends wanted to stone him after the Amalekites' raid [1 Samuel 30:1-6]	Jesus' best friends deserted him in the Garden of Gethsemane [Matthew 26:55-56]
David experienced great distress in a cave [Psalm <u>142</u>]	After his crucifixion, Jesus lay in a cave until he conquered death and arose [Matthew 28:1-7]

Group Discussion

1. In his book *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*, John Ortberg writes, "In any arena where you are concerned about failure, the single most destructive thing you can do is *nothing*." What does doing nothing lead to?
2. John Ortberg goes on to write, "We can survive the loss of an extraordinary number of things, but no one can outlive hope. When it is gone, we are done. Therefore the capacity to stay focused on the presence and power of God in our lives becomes supremely important." In what ways have you found this to be true in your life or the life of someone close to you?
3. What steps can we take that will help us cultivate more hope in Christ?
4. John Ortberg tells a story about a Christian woman who wanted to be buried with a fork in her hand because she wanted everyone to know that the best was yet to come. No matter how deep or dark the cave in which we find ourselves, God is with us. If we will focus on him and take the next step, and then the next, we can rest assured that something better is coming. For those of us who are willing, take a moment to share with the group the "something better" that encourages you.

Personal Journey: To Do Now

1. In general, how do you respond to God when you are in the cave of failure, pain, and disappointment?
 - a. In what ways might your fear of failure hold you back from action during those times?
 - b. In what ways might your view of God hold you back from taking action during those times?

2. In what ways is your sense of value and significance tied to your earthly success? In what ways is it tied to the fact that God loves and values you even when you fall flat on your face?

Personal Journey: To Do Now... continued

2. In what areas of your life are you in the cave? Identify several steps you can take toward trusting God in this area?
 - a. How honest are you being with God?
 - b. What do you need to do to adjust your focus on God?
 - c. For what does God want you to trust him right now?
 - d. What action might God want you to take to make positive changes in your situation?
 - e. What hard questions might God want you to ask?

Personal Journey: To Do on Your Own

God longs for us to trust him, walk with him, and grow to love him more. But we don't grow in these ways unless we make an effort to do so. Set aside some time to answer the following questions and do the following exercises:

1. What we feed our minds is important. Write down the sources of food that nurture your hope in God. Then write down the sources that tend to keep you in the cave, that feed your doubt, pain, or discouragement.
2. If you were sitting across from Jesus in a restaurant, what would he say about the things on which you tend to focus your thoughts?
3. List several positive changes you could make in order to focus more on Jesus. Be sure to include events that have revealed God's love and presence in your life. Feast on this encouragement!
4. Pray everyday about a challenging area of your life – or that of a close friend or family member.