

Study Guide

Monday, July 26. Read Hebrews 13:4-5. Ruth Graham, wife of famous preacher Billy Graham, passed away in 2007. Upon her passing, Billy said, “Ruth was my life partner. We were called by God as a team.” Throughout his marriage, Billy fought to overcome the marital temptations that wounded many other famous evangelists over the years. For example, Billy’s dedication to the principle that he would never meet with a woman alone has become known as the “Billy Graham Rule,” followed by many other preachers and evangelists. In the end, Billy is an example of faithfulness in marriage. The work of keeping the marriage bed pure is hard work, both before and during a marriage. But purity of heart allows God to match and preserve your heart to be a strong part of the team he’s designed for you. Pray that God would preserve your heart for faithfulness in marriage, whether you await marriage or whether you have committed your heart to another person.

Tuesday, July 27. Read Revelation 2:10. Remaining faithful for a moment is often easy, but remaining faithful for life is praiseworthy. The old dog, Argos, in Homer’s classic work, the *Odyssey*, is an example of lifelong faithfulness. The text reads, “In the old days, he used to be taken out by the young men...but now that his master was gone he was lying neglected on the heaps of mule and cow dung...he was full of fleas. He was in poor condition. [But] as soon as he saw Odysseus standing there, he dropped his ears and wagged his tail.” The old dog Argos had been treated poorly as he awaited the return of his master, Odysseus, who had been gone 20 years. Homer exalted the quality of faithfulness by demonstrating the obstacles that the dog had overcome to remain true to his master. In our scripture reading today, John reminds the church at Smyrna to endure the difficulties of this world in order to remain true to our Master until our final days. In the end, those who have proven themselves faithful receive a crown of life. Would you consider today’s momentary troubles worth enduring for the sake of God’s crown of life?

Wednesday, July 28. Read James 1:5-8. In today’s text, James gives advice to the churches in how to ask God for wisdom. If the answer to a prayer for wisdom does not come immediately or visibly, James suggests that people try to avoid letting themselves be “blown and tossed by the wind.” Have you ever found yourself tossing and turning as you wait for God to answer prayer? If you are committed to following God with faithfulness, you will know the challenge of keeping your temper, your doubt, or your anger at bay while God answers your prayer. Sometimes, just being aware of your childish response of being “blown and tossed by the wind” while waiting upon God is the next step in strengthening our resolve to wait upon Him. What is one prayer that you have lifted up to God for a long time, and how can you rekindle your faithfulness in God to answer this prayer?

Thursday, July 29. Read Psalm 71:5-6. What is the year that you first committed yourself to following God? On the one hand, many people tell the story of neglecting God in their youth but finding Him later in life. They tell of the dark years in their life and the faithfulness of God to redeem them from that past. On the other hand, other people tell the story of a strong Christian upbringing and the gift of knowing God from the earliest age. In today’s reading, the Psalmist gives thanks to God that he has known and trusted God from birth. It’s the goal that everyone would share the Psalmist’s testimony of lifelong faithfulness to God. Regardless of your past story, how can you pass-on to the next generation the gift of hearing about God, experiencing God, and trusting in God from the earliest age?

Friday, July 30. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. The greatest challenge we face in temptation is not our *decision* to avoid it. The greatest challenge we face is temptation’s tendency to catch us off-guard in our moment of weakness. Even the most principled among us know that temptation strikes in moments of feeling powerless to resist. Paul wrote today’s verse to remind the church that moments of weakness are no excuse for unfaithfulness. God will not allow even the weakest person to face a temptation that they cannot overcome. When you are in a moment of temptation, remember the promise in today’s scripture: Look for the “way out” that God provides so that you can stand-up to your moment of weakness.