

OUR STRUGGLES

SECONDARY SCHOOLS BIBLE
STUDY GUIDE



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JANUARY 2010

STRUGGLING WITH HOW WE LOOK?

INTRODUCTION

This year we want to start by looking at **our struggles**. Each one of us struggle with a number of things. Our struggles range from self esteem to how we view others. We become anxious of everything despite the word of God encouraging us not to be anxious for anything because God is in control of all things. “I am not good looking, am not intelligent, I come from a poor family, who does he want to be? I knew he was going to fail, my friends are far better than me.” We sometimes even struggle to handle what we have. We struggle to be understood and to understand others. Such things tend to weigh us down and give us a negative self image and unhealthy jealousy. Is there anyone who does not struggle with these issues?

Does God know that we have such struggles? Of course He does. That is why His word is full of pieces of advice to help us overcome such struggles, because He knows that they are disastrous to our lives.

In this study we will try to address some of such struggles through the word of God. We should see what God thinks and how He wants us to think about these struggles.

Note: All Bible references are from the New International Version.

Introduction

“I wish my nose was smaller, no, yours is better but my legs are too short, I am too dark, my arm, my hair, etcetera.” Have you ever heard such cries, or don’t you cry like that sometimes? We always think we were a bit lighter, taller, and shorter like someone else. David valued how he looked and thanked God for creating him that way. He was satisfied with his looks and it was a cause of praise. He realized that God was the wonderful creator. After all we are HIS image.

Study Text Psalm 139:13 –16

Study questions

1. Describe a beautiful/handsome person?
2. How is the psalmist describing how he was formed in verses 13-16?
3. Prove that the psalmist knew who made him from the passage?
4. What do you think is the meaning of “I am fearfully and wonderfully made”?
5. Can you say the same about yourself? Why or Why not?
6. How can this passage encourage someone who condemns him/herself that they are not good looking? How has it encouraged you? How are you going to praise God for the way you look?

Pray that God should help you to appreciate the way He created you and to let it be a cause of praise to Him.

Memory verse:

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful. I know that full well.” Psalm 139:14



STUDY 2

STRUGGLING WITH WHERE WE COME FROM

Introduction

A lot of people wish they were born somewhere than where they are now. This is sometimes because of the challenges they face in their homes. So they wish they were born in a certain family where they could find everything they want. They do not understand that God determines where everyone should be born, hence need for all people to be contented with what they have.

Study Text Acts 17: 26 - 28

Study questions

1. Would you be happier if you were born in a different family or country than the one you are in? Why or why not?
2. What is Paul saying in Acts 17:26-28?
3. “..He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.” :26
 - i. What do you think is the meaning of the above statement?
 - ii. Do you agree that it is God who put you in this country, in

this school, and in the family you belong to?

- iii. How are you going to encourage others to accept where they come from and to see that it is God who put them there?
4. Why does God determine the exact places where people should live, according to verse 27?
5. Do you look at your country, home, and school as a reason for you to seek God? Explain.
6. What do you think is the meaning of verse 28? How can this verse encourage you not to worry about where you come from?

Ask God to help you according to what you have learnt in this study.

Memory verse

“...And He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live...For in Him we live and move and have our being...” Acts 17:26b, 28a.



STUDY 3

STRUGGLING TO BE UNDERSTOOD & ACCEPTED

Introduction

“They don’t understand me!” Of course! They can never understand you because they are not you. We usually struggle to be understood and accepted when we are in various situations. We expect people to feel sorry for us when we are in problems; we need them to understand us when we are struggling, unfortunately, it does not work that way. Hanna was not accepted by Penina and not understood by her own husband and Eli the priest. They both said hurting things to her while in her genuine agony.

Study Text: 1 Samuel 1:3-16

Study questions

1. Have you ever felt like your problems are not understood and someone is even making them worse? Share your experience.
2. Narrate Hanna’s situation?
3. When Peninah (Hanna’s rival, v6-7) was mocking Hanna, what do you think was going on in Hanna’s mind?
4. Did Hanna think that her husband Elkanah understood her situation (v8)? Explain.
5. How might have Hanna felt when Eli the priest said that she was drunk (v14)?
6. What did Hanna depend on in all this? Did it work (refer to what

you know about the end of this story)?

7. What or who do you depend on when you are not understood or accepted?
8. Do you bring joy to other people or you bring pain and suffering?

Ask God to cause you to focus on Him even when you are facing problems.

Memory verse

“In the bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord.” 1 Samuel 1:10



STUDY 4

STRUGGLING TO UNDERSTAND OTHERS BECAUSE OF WHAT WE HAVE

Introduction

One proverb says “it is hard to appreciate a pain of snakebite unless you were once bitten.” Most of people are blinded to other people’s problems and feelings because they are better off than their friends in a certain area of life. For instance, other students do not care that their friend struggles in certain subjects and they even mock them. If you have it you don’t usually care about somebody who does not

have it. Because Peninah had children, she did not care about Hanna's childlessness but cause even more pain by provoking Hanna. We usually struggle to be understood but we make very little efforts to understand others.

Study Text 1 Samuel 1:4 - 8

Study questions

1. Think of something you have always wanted to have but you do not have while your friends easily find it. Share your feelings.
2. Read again verses 4-8. What did the Lord do to Hanna in verse 5?
3. Why would the Lord do something like that to her?
4. Does the Lord allow some difficult situations to happen to us today? Explain.
5. What blinded Peninah from understanding Hanna's problem (v4)?
6. What blinds you from understanding what others are going through to an extent that you even mock them?
7. Read, discuss and apply to your daily life what Jesus said in Matthew 7:12.
8. Would you understand someone's situation more if you knew that it is the Lord who put them in such a situation? Explain.

Pray that God should make you a source of joy and encourage-

ment to others.

Memory verse

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets." Matthew 7:12



STUDY 5

STRUGGLING WITH DISHONESTY

Introduction

Have you ever heard the word *hypocrisy*? This means, double standards or pretence, not being genuine. You say or show one thing but actually you are a different thing altogether. Most of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees were very much like that in Jesus' time. Oh! Actually, even in our time most of us are like that. We claim to be one thing while we practice the opposite. Or, is that not true?

Read Mathew 23: 25 - 28

Study questions

1. Think of a time when you did the opposite of what you believe and claim to be. Can you share that?
2. Find repeated words and opposite words in the passage you

have read. What is the mood of this passage?

3. Why do you think Jesus is speaking in such a strong and fearful manner?
4. What is the problem with dishonesty or pretence or hypocrisy?
5. Do you know any person who lives a life of pretence? Describe his/her life style?
6. Check your life, does your secret life reflect what you claim to believe and be (Christian). Is your involvement in the things of God genuine, are you not just trying to show off to people that you are a Christian?

Ask God to help you to be genuine with your faith and life.

Memory verse

“In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”



STUDY 6

STRUGGLING WITH SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

Introduction

How do you feel when you get 20% in a test? And how do you feel when your teacher says that the highest in that test got 21%? Is the feeling different? Of course, it is different. The moment you know that you are second from the highest you feel like you have done well. But is that true? 20% is 20% and it is failure whether you are the second highest or the lowest. The problem we have is that we compare ourselves with others too much, that we are ready to fail provided there are a lot of people behind us. We think we are better because others are worse in our eyes. We rush to point out at other people's mistakes while we ignore our own.

Read Mathew 7: 1 – 5; Galatians 6: 1 - 2

Study questions

1. Think of a time when you felt like you were being judged by someone. Share your feelings.
2. What is Jesus' advice about judging others according to this passage?
3. What is the danger of judging others (v2)?
4. Why is it foolish to look at a grain of sand in someone's eyes while you have a stone in your own eyes (v3-4)?
5. How can Galatians 6:1-2 help us not to judge others?
6. What should our attitude be towards ourselves and others in re-

lation to sin?

Pray that God should help you to deal with sin in your own life and to lead others to Him in love.

Memory verse

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged... Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Matthew 7:1; Galatians 6:1



STUDY 7

STRUGGLING WITH RESOURCES FORGETTING THE SOURCE

Introduction

It is usually very easy for most people to focus very much on what they have forgetting the one who gave them. Praising the gift forgetting the giver. You might be very intelligent in school and you start thinking that you are the best despising everyone, forgetting that it is God who gives you the ability to understand what you are learning. When we accomplish something in life we usually think it is because we worked very hard forgetting that no matter how hard we work it is God who gives us the ability to accomplish whatever we are doing. Jesus talked of a person who was praising the gift and his abilities forgetting the Source.

Read Luke 12: 13 - 21

Study questions

1. What did someone in the crowd say to Jesus and how did Jesus respond (v13-15)?
2. In your thinking why did Jesus refer to what this person said as greed?
3. Discuss the following statement and apply it in our everyday life: "...a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." V15b.
4. Count how many times does the rich man in the parable refer to himself (how many 'I' 'MY' are there?). What does that show about this man?
5. Is it wrong to be happy for what you have achieved and make plans? Explain.
6. Why do you think God called this man foolish?
7. Are you being foolish or wise in the way you handle what you have? Explain.

Pray to God that He should help you to be wise by realizing that whatever you have comes from God and you must praise Him not the gift.

Memory verse

Then He said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Luke 12:15

STRUGGLING WITH FORGETFULNESS (forgetting what the Lord did for us)

Introduction

The second president to the Republic of Malawi used to say, “*vuto la a Malawi ndi kuiwala msanga, a Malawi sitichedwa kuiwala,*” (Malawians are quick to forget what they have gone through). May be he had a point. This however is not just a problem with Malawians, people all over the world tend to forget their past when they are experiencing good life. They forget their past struggles and how the Lord had helped them through. We forget to learn from the past to live better today and attain a better future.

Read Deuteronomy 8: 10 - 20

Study questions

1. Think of a certain time in your life when you faced some problems and somebody helped you to overcome them. Share.
2. What did the Lord do for the Israelites according to this passage?
3. What would make the Israelites forget the Lord when they get into the Promised Land?
4. Today, what can make us to forget the Lord? Does that happen to you? Explain.
5. What would be the danger if the Israelites forgot the Lord, according to verses 19-20?
6. If we forget the Lord because of our present life, what can be the

Let us ask God that He should always remind us what He has done for us to be where we are so that we can never forget Him.

Memory verse

“when you have eaten and are satisfied praise the Lord your God...be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God.” Deuteronomy 8:10a, 11a

