



Study Guide - Week 2

Sermon Recap

Josh emphasizes that everyone experiences pain and difficult circumstances that can leave us feeling like prisoners of our emotions and situations. He reflects on how even faithful followers of God, like John the Baptist, can doubt God's love and presence during tough times. Instead of focusing solely on our circumstances, he urges us to remember that God's love is unwavering and rooted in His nature, not our situation. Ultimately, Josh encourages us to desire God even in uncertainty, recognizing that our current struggles do not define our worth or His love for us.

Ice Breaker

When you're stuck in traffic, what song would you play to lift your spirits?

Discussion Questions

- ▶ What are some ways we cope with feelings of loneliness and despair when we are going through tough times? Can you think of a time when you felt alone in your difficulties? How did you cope, and what did you learn from that experience?
- ▶ How can understanding the difference between God's love (*agape* love) and human love affect your relationships with others and with God?

Read Scripture

Matthew 11:2-6 NIV

² When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples ³ to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

⁴ Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. ⁶ Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

Mark 6:17-29 NIV

¹⁷ For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. ¹⁸ For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, ²⁰ because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

²¹ Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²² When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." ²³ And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

²⁴ She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?"

"The head of John the Baptist," she answered.

²⁵ At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

²⁶ The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, ²⁸ and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the

girl, and she gave it to her mother. ²⁹ On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Discussion Questions

- ▶ In what ways can viewing Jesus' response to John the Baptist help us understand God's presence in our own struggles?
- ▶ How can we reconcile our feelings of doubt about God's love when our circumstances seem overwhelmingly negative?
- ▶ What does it mean to 'desire to desire God,' and how can this concept help us during our lowest moments? How can you cultivate a desire for God in your life, especially when you are struggling? What practical steps can you take?

Prayer

- Ask for prayer requests from the group.
- Pray for peace and understanding in times of hardship.
- Request guidance to trust in God's plan, despite current circumstances.
- Seek strength to apply the sermon's message in daily life.

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