



The Pursuit of Happiness

Week 8

Day 1: Overcoming Criticism with God's Love

Reading: Mark 6:1-6, Romans 8:31-39

Devotional: Jesus faced criticism and rejection in his hometown, yet He remained steadfast in His mission. Like the residents of Nazareth, we can sometimes let familiarity breed contempt, missing the miraculous in the mundane. Today, reflect on areas where criticism - whether from others or self-inflicted - may be hindering your spiritual growth. Remember that God's love for you is unchanging and unshakeable, regardless of others' opinions or your own self-doubt. How can you open your heart to see God working in unexpected ways in your life?

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Day 2: Faith Beyond Appearances

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 11:1-6

Devotional: The people of Nazareth couldn't see past Jesus' ordinary appearance as a carpenter's son. Their lack of faith limited what God could do among them. Similarly, we often struggle to believe in God's power when circumstances seem unremarkable or challenging. Today, consider where you might be putting limitations on God based on outward appearances. How can you cultivate a faith that sees beyond the visible and trusts in God's unseen work? Ask God to strengthen your faith and help you recognize His presence in every aspect of your life.

Day 3: Embracing God's Transformative Power

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:22-24

Devotional: Just as the barren Death Valley burst into bloom with unexpected rain, God can bring new life to areas we consider dead or hopeless. Reflect on the parts of your life where you've given up hope for change. Have you allowed criticism or past experiences to convince you that transformation is impossible? Remember that in Christ, you are a new creation. Pray for God to renew your mind and help you see the potential for growth and change in every situation.

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Day 4: Finding Hope in God's Promises

Reading: Jeremiah 29:11-13, Romans 15:13

Devotional: Even in the darkest circumstances, God offers hope and a future. Sometimes our attempts at solutions can lead to greater problems. However, God's solutions are perfect and eternal. Today, meditate on God's promises for your life. Where do you need to release your own solutions and trust in God's plan? Ask God to fill you with hope and to guide you towards His perfect will for your life.

Day 5: Experiencing God's Presence in Suffering

Reading: Psalm 23, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Devotional: Life often presents us with unexpected challenges and suffering, like the residents of Times Beach who discovered their town was toxic. In these moments, it's easy to question God's presence or goodness. Yet, it's often in our deepest valleys that God's presence becomes most tangible. Reflect on a time of suffering in your life. How did you experience God's comfort? How can you extend that comfort to others who are struggling? Today, thank God for His constant presence, even in the midst of life's toughest circumstances, and ask Him to use your experiences to minister to others.