



Strength for the Journey

“Jesus, Our Champion”

Matthew 16:13-23



“Jesus, Our Champion”

- Lesson 1
- Lesson 2**
- Lesson 3

Group Study Introduction

Use the following questions and exercises as your group time allows. Feel free to skip one or more questions in each section as necessary. If you have less than thirty minutes for group discussion, we recommend skipping the “Getting Started” section. Be sure to save time for prayer at the end of your meeting, using the “Strength through Prayer” section.

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell remembers that when his mother gave him a job to do, she would say, “Now remember, Joe, there are no shortcuts.” And Joe would have to reply, “OK, Mom, I’ll do the whole job.”

- What chore did you try to circumvent with a shortcut when you were growing up (cleaning your room, washing dishes, working in the yard, doing homework, etc.)? What chores or obligations are you tempted to skirt with a shortcut now?
- In what way can you identify, in your spiritual life, with the kind of rhythm Joe describes: a great spiritual high followed by phenomenal disappointment?

Strength through Scripture:

Open your Bibles to Matthew 16 and have a volunteer read verses 13–23 out loud.

- 1) In Joe’s words, Peter went from an A to an F, from a wizard to a dunce, in one brief section of Scripture. If you were Peter, what range of emotions would you have gone through in this story?
- 2) What does Joe mean when he says that Peter had the right answer but the wrong expectation?
- 3) How much do you struggle with wanting, or even expecting, Jesus to go after the “symptoms” of our fallen world—for example, removing unpleasant circumstances or people in your life?

Notes:

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“But what about you?” he asked.
“Who do you say I am?”
 Matthew 16:15



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Notes:

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4) “Get behind me, Satan!”—Why was Jesus so hard on Peter?

5) Joe states, “Jesus doesn’t settle for shortcuts; He goes for the solution.” What would the shortcut have been for Jesus? How did He go for the solution instead? What was the result?

Digging Deeper:

If your group has enough time (i.e., you’ve listened to the audio on your own), answer one or more of these optional questions.

1) What did Jesus mean when He said, “You are Peter (which means “rock”), and on this rock I will build my church”?

2) Can you imagine the celebration in hell following Jesus’ death? Why did the party come to a crashing end?

3) Why does Satan, yet today, not want us to know that Jesus won their cosmic battle?

Strength through Sharing:

1) Have you ever strongly declared your trust in Christ for specific challenges in life and then felt that He never showed up? How have you dealt with the resulting disappointment or even disillusionment? Or perhaps you have realized a sort of “disconnect” between your spiritual life and “real life”—you have declared Jesus as Lord but have not invited Him to be Lord over a particular part of your life. What would it mean for you to begin making Him Lord in that area?

2) Is it possible, in light of the struggles you are facing, that you might have devised what seems like a solution to you—but Jesus would say it’s a shortcut, with the devil lurking in the shadows?



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Notes:

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments as a group in silent, personal prayer. Acknowledge your faith and trust in Christ, be honest about any disappointments in your relationship, and ask the Lord to reveal to you any shortcuts you might be attempting to make in your spiritual life.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

“Jesus, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Spare me from knowing the right answer about who You are but holding wrong expectations about what You want to do in my life and in the world.”

When you are finished with this time for silent, personal prayer, you may want to move into a time of group prayer, praying for one another.

Closing Call to Action:

When a difficult moment hits us, we have to look behind the curtain and realize that it’s not our boss, brother, sister, or enemy who is working through that moment—but a deeper, more treacherous source. Satan wants to use those moments to defeat us. We need to respond, “Wait a minute, I’m not defeated. Jesus won! You can’t have my heart; we’ve already won.”

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