**Connect Study – Coming out of the drought and into the abundance of rain!**

Life does not always go as we expect it. Sometimes we go through one door and it seems like life took a wrong turn. And we feel like we ended up in a desert, in a drought of epic proportions with adversity on every side. If you have ever been to a desert, you will know that you will quickly die if you don’t have any water to drink. The enemy wants us to die in the desert. Often it is not literally a physical death but a spiritual one so that we lose all hope.

Psalm 84:5-7 (NKJV)

Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
They make it a spring;
The rain also covers it with pools.
They go from strength to strength;
Each one appears before God in Zion.

**Don’t give up but don’t depend on you!**

When you walk into a desert, your strength can’t be in yourself or you will never make it. You are not in the desert to die, but to get a new way to live. When God is preparing you, He will get you through a time of testing so that he can prepare you for what he has in store for you or else you will never be able to walk into it. If God gave you a blessing that you aren’t ready for, you wouldn’t be able to handle it. The key here is to understand that God wants us to get out of our own strength into His strength so that we can enjoy what He has prepared for us.

The key to coming victorious out of a desert is to never give up. Some droughts are short, some are longer. If you keep on going and trusting, God will revolutionise your life. Like the people of Israel in the desert when they received the manna, we only have grace for a day so that we can depend upon Him and his sovereign provision.

**What’s the Valley of Baca?**

The Valley of Baca or weeping. This was a place filled with thorns and all sorts of poisonous animals, so it was impossible to go through it without suffering extreme hardship. What’s more interesting is that it was the only passageway in the hills where Israel cities of refuge were located. It was also the valley before Jerusalem where the temple was found. In other words, to get to the blessings and the presence of God we need to first pass through this valley.

**How to survive the desert?**

1. **Set your eyes in the right direction!**

In the valley of Baca the enemy wants us to look down so that he can load us up with rubbish, fear and worry about the future. And the problem with looking down is that you can’t see where you are going. Alternatively, you can look straight ahead, which is better than looking down. But the problem is that you can only see so far. But the key is the third option, and that is to look up where your redemption comes from. When you do it and you trust God, He is like a master chess master who knows all the right moves for your life. He wants you to trust Him so that he can lead you into victory into his plan that is good.

The Lord is asking you today, can you look up? Do you trust me?

1. **Be thankful!**

In verse 6 the Bible says that this valley of Baca will become a place of refreshing springs, but that can only happen if we can become thankful. Many Christians don’t know what their purpose in life is, but the bible clearly states that we should give thanks in every situation. What it produces is a spring in the middle of the desert. When you are able to thank God in every circumstance, you build a reservoir. Those reservoirs will also help you with future deserts. That’s what going from strength to strength means - once you conquer your desert you won’t respond to the next one the same way. In other words, you move from being a survivor to becoming an overcomer. Your test becomes your testimony. You start to live in the God-given vision and not in your circumstance. And you start to walk in supernatural favour in heavenly mode.

1. **Build an altar of prayer and praise!**

Jehosaphat had different enemies coming against him. And that’s how we feel sometimes, under attack from every side. You look at your financial circumstances and you think there is no way out it. Perhaps it’s your health, and it seems to be no cure. But Jehosaphat’s response was to pray and praise God and the Lord responded to him through someone else saying: the battle is not yours; it belongs to the Lord. And the Lord also gave him a plan – to march towards the battlefield praising and giving honour to God. Victory is preceded by praise! And then the Lord told him to stop and watch God fight for him. Are you fighting a battle God was meant to fight? You’re fighting with worry, with anxiety, or fear, but God wants us to give him praise and pray because he has already won the battle. Let God fight the battle!

When you let God fight the battle, it changes what you take home. Jehoshaphat obeyed the Lord and as a result his enemies defeated each other. He had to do nothing! As a result, the plunder was too big for them to take home. God sometimes lets us win the battles in our own strength. But when we let Him fight, the results will be much greater and better!

1. **Stop complaining and start declaring!**

Droughts are not the time to complain, but the time to proclaim. In the desert, the people of Israel turned an 11-day trip into a 40-year journey because of murmur and complain. There is a book that tells the story of a Jewish man who became known as ‘The Circle Maker’. For a whole year there was no rain in his region, he took a staff and drew a big circle on the ground in the middle of his town square. He determined he wouldn’t come out of it until God answered his prayers. After the first prayer, rain began to fall; but he needed more than that. So, he prayed a second time and it started to pour down; then he prayed a third time asking God for a rain of favour and blessings; and rain turned into something more gentle.

What kind of desert are you in? Instead of complaining, build your altar of prayer. Then start declaring the word of God over your situation. Whether it is sickness or financial or marriage issues, find scriptures that speak God’s promises over that drought! Make bold prayers based on those promises.

**Discussion questions:**

We all go through difficult moments in life. But the question the Lord is asking us in the middle of the desert is… Do you trust me? Can you trust God that by looking up, praying and praising Him, and choosing to declare his word instead of complaining He’s going to defeat your enemies?

We encourage you to pray for one another after discussing these questions:

1. What are some of the common deserts people go through? Are you in one of those?
2. What was the source of your strength the last time you were in a desert?
3. What does it mean to look down, look straight, and look up?
4. How can thankfulness help you?
5. How strong is your personal altar? Encourage one another with practical ways to make it stronger.