

# LifeGroup Resource Guide

for the week of May 29, 2016

Forget not His benefits...

*Acts 1:8: You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

*Hebrews 2:1-4: Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it... How can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to His will.*

The primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to empower you to be a witness to Jesus Christ and the salvation that comes in His name. In other words, to be a witness for Jesus Christ, we first need a witness. The New Testament describes this witness as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the empowering of the Holy Spirit, or the filling of the Holy Spirit. You must not expect your experience of the Holy Spirit's witness to be identical with another nor should any single experience or manifestation be projected as normative for all. There are various and diverse experiences of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes He comes upon you gently and other times as a mighty torrent of conviction and strength. What is normative is that the Holy Spirit's coming is a tangible, albeit sometimes ineffable, experience in the life of a man because He comes to bear witness...

His witness brings a fresh awareness of the presence of God. The Holy Spirit makes real to us the things which we have believed by faith. His love, His grace, His majesty, and His strength are not merely the lyrics of choruses and hymns anymore. Faith is no longer merely the will to believe or a cognitive affirmation of doctrinal truth. Instead faith becomes, through the witness of the Holy Spirit, like a living umbilical cord between the seen and the unseen, nourishing and sustaining our life in Him.

His witness provokes in us a fresh sense of awe in the presence of God. Then men of Scripture who meet God never refer to Him tritely or in over-familiar terms. Their intimacy with Him is never an excuse for presumptuous speech or behavior. Instead men, in whom the Spirit bears witness, have a deep reverence for the Lord. They recognize the gravity of their sin, the duplicity of their ways, the great disparity between their humanity and His glory, greatness, and majesty.

His witness brings the assurance of God's love. The Holy Spirit's testimony gives to us the overwhelming knowledge of God's love through Jesus Christ. The Spirit powerfully proclaims to the soul of the believer what He said to His own son, "You are my beloved son, in you do I take pleasure." Paul simply described it this way, "The Spirit bearing witness with our Spirit that we are sons of God." (Romans 8:16)

Thomas Goodwin, a Puritan living in the 17th century described it this way: A man is walking with his little child. The child knows that he is the child of his father; he knows that his father loves him; he rejoices in that love; and he is happy in it. There is no uncertainty about his relationship with his father but suddenly the father, moved by some impulse known only to him, takes hold of his child and picks him up. He lifts him through the air above him and then lowers him so that their eyes meet. He tussles his hair, squeezes his arms, embraces him, and then sets him down and they continue walking on together. The child knew before that his father loved him, and he knew that he was his child. Nevertheless this loving embrace, the serendipitous joy of being swung through the air, the meeting of their eyes, and the tussle of his hair all communicate this love in extraordinary ways. The relationship is unchanged and yet the child is assured in extraordinary ways. Such is the witness of the Holy Spirit.

The witness of the Holy Spirit is not a once-for-all-time experience. It is his continuing gift to us for all time. He is our witness so that we might bear witness to Him. May we all be empowered by the Witness of God in Jesus' Name.

Enjoy your LifeGroup, *Mark*

## Getting to know one another better...

What is your first memory of viewing our world from a great height (airplane, tall building, mountain top)? What impressed you when you saw "everyday sights" from high above?

## Exploring Psalm 103...

Read Psalm 103

*1 Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.  
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
And forget none of His benefits;  
3 Who pardons all your iniquities,  
Who heals all your diseases;  
4 Who redeems your life from the pit,  
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;  
5 Who satisfies your years with good things,  
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.*

*6 The LORD performs righteous deeds  
And judgments for all who are oppressed.  
7 He made known His ways to Moses,  
His acts to the sons of Israel.  
8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.  
9 He will not always strive with us,  
Nor will He keep His anger forever.  
10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,  
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.  
11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.  
12 As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.  
13 Just as a father has compassion on his children,  
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.  
14 For He Himself knows our frame;  
He is mindful that we are but dust.*

*15 As for man, his days are like grass;  
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.  
16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more,  
And its place acknowledges it no longer.  
17 But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him,  
And His righteousness to children's children,  
18 To those who keep His covenant  
And remember His precepts to do them.*

*19 The LORD has established His throne in the heavens,  
And His sovereignty rules over all.  
20 Bless the LORD, you His angels,  
Mighty in strength, who perform His word,  
Obeying the voice of His word!  
21 Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,  
You who serve Him, doing His will.  
22 Bless the LORD, all you works of His,  
In all places of His dominion;*

*Bless the LORD, O my soul!*

Here in this psalm we have the awesome and supreme reign of God coupled with His equally awesome and unending lovingkindness. In Psalm 103 we celebrate that God is our King and God is our Father. Yet this psalm is not merely a doctrinal confession of God's saving presence. It also expresses the experience of salvation- this is what it feels like to be saved.

What are your general impressions of the psalm?

Note the first and last sentences. How does this bracketing affect your understanding of the psalm's contents?

Why do you think that the psalmist speaks to his own soul?

Salvation is more richly complex than we sometimes think. What five actions of God add up to salvation (103.3-5)? Why does the psalmist start his message with these five actions of God?

Describe how you have seen one of these actions of God at work in your life. Which of these have you benefited from?

In verses 6-14, the psalmist makes many statements about what God is like, about the character of God. Remembering that he is addressing his own soul, why do you think he writes these statements about God? Which statement has the most relevance to your own soul right now, and why?

Carefully observe the contrast between us (103.15-16) and God (103.17-19). How does this make you feel about yourself? Better, worse? Why do you think the psalmist includes this comparison?

Any prayer-filled reflection of our salvation surely must conclude with praising our saving God. The praise is a symphony that is beautifully orchestrated in 103.20-22. Who are the players in

this hierarchy of praises? Use your imagination and describe what this scene of praise might look like.

The psalmist gives a beautiful picture of what God's salvation means for His people. What dimension of salvation would you like to explore more for yourself personally? Why?

We value the opportunity for each LifeGroup to be an "orchestra" of praise rather than an orchestra mostly of petition. As we approach the end of this Spring session, what praises do you want to highlight as your LifeGroup prays together?

How can your LifeGroup be more intentional about being an "orchestra" of praise rather than an orchestra mostly of petition?

my prayer requests (think of what you want to share in advance)...

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Praying for my group...