



Trusting
GOD IN
MY
Tight Places

LEADERSHIP BY FAITH

MAN OF THE WORD MANUAL • FALL 2020

TRUSTING GOD IN MY TIGHT PLACES:
LEADERSHIP BY FAITH

MCBC Man of the Word
Fall 2020

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TRUSTING GOD IN MY TIGHT PLACES: LEADERSHIP BY FAITH

THEME

There is a measurable difference between intellectual and experiential knowledge. The former is learned in a classroom while the latter is learned in the crucible of life. As part of our sanctification process, God brings each of us into tight places. The goal is for the believer to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. This booklet is a ten-week study designed to challenge us as men to cling to God as our refuge and strength for He is abundantly available for help in our tight places.

THEME PASSAGE

“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.”

Psalm 46:1

MANUAL

Each week’s resources consist of:

- **SCRIPTURE MEDITATION** – A passage pertaining to the week’s article to be read and considered during the week
- **BOOK READING** – Maurice Roberts, *The Thought of God* (Banner of Truth, 2013)
- **QUOTATION FOR MEDITATION** – Additional food for thought
- **M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE** – A way to keep on track in reading through the Bible in 2020 using the M’Cheyne system
- **PERSONAL REFLECTIONS** – A week-by-week place to record what God is teaching you
- **ARTICLES** – Testimonies and devotionals related to the theme, written by Mount Calvary Baptist Church men

Don’t let these materials become daunting. Let whatever you do be a delight. If you can’t keep up every component, choose the ones that you can use consistently and stick with them.

TIME

10 weeks: September 6 – November 14, 2020

GOALS

1. To cast ourselves upon God for His abundant help in our tight places through scriptural meditation.
2. To draw benefit from a compilation of editorials over a 15-year span from the former editor of Banner of Truth magazine to help cast our care and gaze upon Christ.
3. To edify fellow Mount Calvary men through prayer and accountability.

EVENTS

Men's Prayer Breakfasts: September 5, October 10, November 14

Men and Boys Outing: November 7

MY PRAYER PARTNER (NAME, PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL):

MAN OF THE WORD PROGRAM

The leadership of Mount Calvary Baptist Church created the Man of the Word program in obedience to the command of 2 Timothy 2:2: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” This ministry functions under the leadership of Pastor Mark Minnick and Pastor Jerid Jones. The following men are the current Man of the Word officers.

President	Eric Newton
Vice President	Tom Kendall
Treasurer	Roger Bradley
Food Director	Al Ellison
Project Coordinator	Jesse Keck
Manual Director	Ries Barlow

We are grateful to Pastor Mark Minnick for his encouragement and leadership and for his vision for the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church. We would also like to express our gratitude to the men who have donated their time, energy, and gifts by writing spiritually edifying articles for our growth and encouragement.

FOREWORD

An old adage says, “Desperate times call for desperate measures.” For many, the events of 2020 have provoked the most pervasive desperation we have ever seen. While legitimate concerns abound—medical, political, economic, to name a few—it is quite apparent that spiritual needs pervade and transcend them all. So, what would it mean to employ “desperate measures” in these difficult days? Or is that even the right question?

You have probably taken note of our pastor’s frequent urging that God has ordained circumstances like these so that “My people who are called by My name [will] humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways” (2 Chron. 7:14). Consequently, it isn’t that we need to discover some new approach to the Christian life that pertains only to challenging times. Rather, God is calling us to the characteristic means of drawing near to Him—humility, prayer, worship, and repentance. Perhaps we could say, “Desperate times call for seeking God with desperate hearts.”

Surely our assembly needs each of us as men, young and old alike, to answer this call. If we do not humbly seek the Lord in a way that edifies and influences our families and friends and coworkers and neighbors, how can we expect for God to answer our prayer that many would turn to Him? We find ourselves in tight places. It’s even a little challenging to envision how to carry out the various aspects of our men’s ministry this fall. But God is abundantly available to help in such tight spots (Ps. 46:1). He is ready to hear our prayer from heaven (2 Chron. 7:14). He has told us to seek His face (Psalm 25:8).

May the Lord be pleased to use this cycle’s emphasis to draw us nearer to Him—nearer in faith, nearer in likeness, nearer alongside those He has called us to lead. My prayers are with you. And more importantly, the Lord Jesus “always lives to make intercession for” you (Heb. 7:25).

Eric Newton

September 6 – September 11

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

“Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.”

1 Samuel 30:6

BOOK READING

Roberts, pp. 3-8

QUOTATION FOR MEDITATION

“It is our folly that we allow ourselves to look at life’s problems as if they were somehow isolated from God” (p. 5).

M’CHEYNE BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Sep 5	1 Sam 29, 30	1 Cor 10	Eze 8	Ps 46, 47
Sep 6	1 Sam 31	1 Cor 11	Eze 9	Ps 48
Sep 7	2 Sam 1	1 Cor 12	Eze 10	Ps 49
Sep 8	2 Sam 2	1 Cor 13	Eze 11	Ps 50
Sep 9	2 Sam 3	1 Cor 14	Eze 12	Ps 51
Sep 10	2 Sam 4, 5	1 Cor 15	Eze 13	Ps 52-54
Sep 11	2 Sam 6	1 Cor 16	Eze 14	Ps 55

PERSONAL REFLECTION

SEEKING GOD'S FACE IN PERPLEXITY

LAYTON TALBERT

The attentive reader of the Scripture confronts a curious paradox. Sometimes God is praised for being an ever present help in the hour of need. Other times He is questioningly craved because of His apparent absence, when the heavens are brass and the soul seems to wander in a God-forsaken wasteland. This paradox is perhaps best illustrated by the following verses, only one psalm apart:

Psalm 46:1—God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (cf. 145:18)

Psalm 44:24—Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and oppression?

Both of these psalms were authored by the sons of Korah, yet they seem to express apparently contradictory sentiments about the accessibility of God in times of trouble. On the one hand, God is a “very findable help in trouble.” On the other, God seems to be “un-findable” and indifferent to our times of need. Is God a very present help in trouble? Or, does He hide Himself from us in our trouble? How can both be true?

Times When God Is Silent Or Hidden

Sometimes God remains silent because our iniquities have separated us from our God, and our sins have hidden His face from us (Is. 59:2). He may hide His face and withdraw the blessedness of a sense of His presence to make us conscious of His displeasure, weary of our sin, and thirsty for His presence.

- “You have covered Yourself with a cloud, that prayer should not pass through” (Lam. 3:44).
- “O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?” (Jer. 14:8).
- “And He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith” (Deut. 32:20).
- “I will wait upon the LORD, Who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him” (Is. 8:17)

Silence because of sin we can understand. But what about silence in times of suffering and need?

- “Why do You hide Your face, and regard me as Your enemy?” (Job 13:24).
- “When He hides His face, who then can see Him, whether it is against a nation or a man alone” (Job 34:29).
- “Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide in times of trouble?” (Ps. 10:1).
- “How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?” (Ps. 13:1).
- “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning?” (Ps. 22:1).
- “You hid Your face and I was troubled” (Ps. 30:7).
- “Why do You hide Your face, and forget our affliction and our oppression?” (Ps. 44:24).
- “LORD, why do You cast off my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?” (Ps. 88:14).
- “How long, LORD? Wilt You hide Yourself forever?” (Ps. 89:46).

Perhaps the most succinct summary of this experience is expressed by Isaiah: “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior” (Is. 45:15). But this divine hiding, which for the present seems perplexing, cloaks only gracious intentions. “God keeps hidden under the clouds of the contemporary situation the purposes of mercy He is about to reveal” (E. J. Young, *Isaiah*, III, 208).

Explaining God's Silence In Times Of Need

Our sense of the apparent absence or silence or hiddenness of God may be traceable to any of a number of possible explanations.

- *Misinterpretation*—Often we misinterpret God's silence as ignorance, inability, harshness, insensibility, indifference, punishment, or even cruelty.

- *Insubordination*—We may be approaching our difficulty in the wrong spirit and attitude; anger, bitterness, accusation, in short, in-submissiveness to the will of our sovereign, wise, and loving Lord may make Him appear hidden to our eyes.
- *Unreasonableness*—Sometimes God gives us a “cooling off” period and allows us to run through our inventory of questions and work through our emotional reactions. You cannot reason with a drunk, and in the face of devastating people can be emotionally inebriated, under the influence of visceral and irrational emotions. Nor can you reason with a raving, sobbing child without first giving the child time to get under control before you can talk reasonably with him.
- *Preoccupation*—Sometimes we are too busy focusing on the wrong issues and asking the wrong questions (“Why?”) that we cannot hear what God may have saying to us all along.
- *Impatience*—God allows time for patience “to have its perfect work” and the Scripture enjoins us to do the same (Js. 1:2-8). As finite creatures, we have difficulty adjusting ourselves and our circumstances to God’s sense of time and timing.
- *Higher Purpose*—Along with patience, we must learn to cultivate an acceptance of the fact that God always has higher aims than what we can imagine or understand. Ultimately, God’s intent is to glorify Himself in us and through our circumstances (Rom. 11:33-12:2).

Responding To The Silence Of God

How does the psalmist respond to this hiddenness of God?

- “When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ My heart said to You, ‘Your face, LORD, will I seek.’ Do not hide Your face from me” (Ps. 27:9).
- “Turn to me in the multitude of Your tender mercies. And do not hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily” (Ps. 69:16-17).
- “Answer me speedily, O LORD; my spirit fails! Do not hide Your face from me, lest I be like those that go down into the pit” (Ps. 143:7).

If we come back full circle to Psalms 44 & 46, we discover that the larger context is enlightening. Psalm 42 actually begins Book 2 of the Psalms. Notice the sentiment expressed in 42:1-3, 9-10. God is veiled, and the psalmist seeks to encourage his soul to dwell on (42:6) and to hope in God (42:5,11). These thoughts continue into Psalm 43 (see vv. 2, 5). Psalm 44 is a frustrated cry for God to answer and help (44:9-26); it is the cry of one wearied by waiting, confused as to why God seems to take so long, and wondering in the mean time if God will *ever* do *anything* at all. How, then, does the psalmist move from the near despair of Psalm 44 to the secure assurance of Psalm 46? The answer, in the providential arrangement of the Psalter, is Psalm 45.

In Psalm 45 the psalmist loses himself in God, meditating on His sovereign, kingly control over all things, including enemies. Psalm 46 provides the resolution to the previous soul-cry, as the psalmist exults in God's answering at last and manifesting that He was, indeed, present, aware, concerned, and active in the plight of His people. It closes with the admonition "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (46:10).

The biblical response to divine silence in the face of calamity and perplexity is three-fold:

- (1) Hope in God (*Who else is there? Hope is confident expectation.*)
- (2) Dwell on God (*Remember all His past acts, and meditate on His character in Scripture.*)
- (3) Be Still and Know He is God (*Cultivate a patient, quiet acceptance of His sovereign purposes & timing.*)

(Incidentally, the answer for the silence of God because of sin is no different. See Lamentations 3.)

The Personal Appeal and Practical Use of the Psalms in Perplexity

The Psalms are a divinely prescribed tonic for times of pain and perplexity. In her book on providence and suffering, *When God Weeps: Why Our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty*, Joni Eareckson Tada (no stranger to suffering) recommends that in suffering we turn not to the psychologists but to the psalmists as the most satisfying and biblical way to

grapple with very real, very human feelings. Her phraseology is arrestingly vivid:

If emotions are the language of the soul, then the Book of Psalms gives us the grammar and syntax, teaching us how to wrestle, inviting us to question, and to vent anger in such a way as to move up and out of despair. The Psalms wrap nouns and verbs around our pain better than any other book.

As the examples she cites effectively illustrate, the emotional range of the Psalms is remarkably wide. More significantly, *they are God-inspired expressions of human wrestlings with human emotions*. When we find our voice in the Psalms, “we are speaking God’s language, echoing his own words back to him. When we wrap our anguish”—our questions, doubts, fears, or frustrations—“around a biblical psalm, we’re searching for him” in a profoundly and expressly biblical way. “And when we seek, we will find.” It is, after all, God’s hiddenness and our hunger for His presence that (as another writer has observed) magnify Him as “gloriously desirable” above all else.