

# LIFELINES

Six Words of Rescue for Those  
Who Are Struggling

WEEKLY STUDY



## WEEK ONE

*Pastor Jacob's new series is based on the beautiful and challenging letter to the Philippians. Each week we will be offered a "lifeline" that God intends to lift us up by. Many of us may find ourselves in the downward spiral of comparison these days when more and more of our life and interaction takes place online. That tendency can leave us constantly unsettled and unhappy. Instead of trying to reach some status in comparison to others, we are invited to lower ourselves so that God can be the one to lift us up. If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide.*

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then prayer this prayer together:

*God, You know our hearts and you know our weakness. When we are in a season of stress, we can fall into traps that keep our focus on ourselves instead of you. Forgive us God. We reach for the lifelines you offer to us to be lifted up to a beautiful life in Christ. We reach for Jesus. Amen.*

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## DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: PHILIPPIANS 1.29-30

<sup>29</sup> *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,*

<sup>30</sup> *since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.*

- When we live in a pattern of comparing ourselves to others, our own joy and suffering look different. We can be limited by our suffering when compared to the lives of others, or we can take comfort in knowing that our suffering does not mean that our faith is weak. Rather, we can look for the ways God is able to use our suffering to bring about good. Do you ever find yourself comparing your suffering with the suffering of others? Have you ever been surprised to learn that others are struggling just as much as you?
- *Pray that God would give you the strength to withstand seasons of suffering so that others would be encouraged and see Jesus in you.*

TUESDAY: PHILIPPIANS 2.6-8

*(JESUS) Who, being in very nature God,*

*did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

<sup>7</sup> *rather, he made himself nothing*

*by taking the very nature of a servant,*

*being made in human likeness.*

<sup>8</sup> *And being found in appearance as a man,*

*he humbled himself*

*by becoming obedient to death—*

*even death on a cross!*

- These words are most likely taken from an ancient poem or song. Our songs of worship give our hearts refrains of truth that take root in our soul and give us solid ground to stand on especially in times of trial. The truth stated here is about the identity and nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus has the highest status a person could ever have. He is the Son of God. And yet, he lowered himself to the lowest status a person could have. When have you been asked to serve a role that could be seen as “beneath” you? Is it ever difficult to lower yourself when it doesn’t seem required?
- *Pray these verses from Philippians 2.6-8 that they may become formational in your understanding of who Jesus is and who you are called to be.*

WEDNESDAY: ROMANS 12.2

<sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- When we compare ourselves to the standards of the world, we will be formed by the standards of the world. But when we allow God to renew our minds we will have what we need to tell the difference. Where do you see the pattern of the world and the pattern of Christ at odds? Are there times and places where it is difficult to tell the difference?
- *Pray that your mind will continually be transformed by God so that God’s will will become known to you.*

THURSDAY: PHILIPPIANS 2.3

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves...*

- Paul is preparing the believers in Philippi to follow Jesus in community. He is asking them to think about their motivation. Don’t act for your own sake, live the best life by putting others before yourself. When do you find it difficult to think of others as higher than yourself? What good things have come from placing a higher value on others?
- *Pray for a clear view of your own motivations in your daily life. Ask God for a heart that regularly places others above yourself.*

FRIDAY: 2 CORINTHIANS 13.5

<sup>5</sup> *Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? (NRSV)*

- This verse from another of Paul’s letters is a reminder that we do better when we compare ourselves to Jesus instead of others. Of course we fall short of Jesus every time, so we do so in the context of the grace given to us through Christ. Do you realize that Jesus Christ is in you?

- *Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the grace that we receive through Jesus Christ. Pray that your striving would be for Jesus to become more evident in you.*

SATURDAY: JAMES 4.1-10

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?*

<sup>2</sup> *You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup> When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

<sup>4</sup> *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? <sup>6</sup> But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:*

*"God opposes the proud  
but shows favor to the humble."*

<sup>7</sup> *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

- Humble yourselves and God will lift you up. This is the conclusion of James when seeking an answer to the fighting and quarreling taking place in the world. Do you find yourself frustrated with the state of the world around you? Do you find yourself tempted to enter into those quarrels with a less-than pure heart? What would it look like to humble yourself in response to the activity in the world today?
- *Pray for a purified heart that is able to resist evil and submit to God as God lifts you up.*

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Is constant comparison to others an issue in your life? Whom do you tend to compare yourself to? How does it feel when you do that?
- Paul tells us that humility is the way of Christ. The lifeline we are offered is to know that the way to be lifted up is to lower ourselves down. What might cause you to feel resistant to the idea of lowering yourself down? What are the risks? What is the difference between lifting yourself up and God lifting you up?