

Before you look at the answers study the passages and talk with others about the Bible study. Reflect and journal.

Answers to the Bible study questions

1. Vs 6 of Psalm 112 says, "Such people will not be overcome by evil circumstances." The question is who are these people and why are they not overcome by evil circumstances? These are people of the Old Testament who are God-fearing Jews who "Delight in doing what He commands." They are people who believe in God and stay in a covenant relationship with God. Because of that God's presence will protect them. They are so sold out that whatever happens to them they believe that God is on their side and they are on His side as well.

In the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego three young Jewish men are called on to bow to the Babylonian King or die. In the agreement they made with their God they are not to bow before any man or religious idol or god. So King Nebuchadnezzar threatens to burn them alive if they will not bow to him and the image of himself that he built. Here is what they say to him, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, Your Majesty can be sure that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up." Daniel 3:16-18

It takes a lot of spiritual maturity to be willing and able to value God more than self. So these people are people who know God and have a relationship of substance with their God. As is stated this God represents salvation, He is one who saves those who turn to Him. He loves us!

2. Verse 7 says, "They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the Lord to care for them." Meaning is given by the individual to every circumstance in their life. Everyone has a grid that they interpret life with or give meaning to. For the believer who knows the goodness of God and God's Word, life has a whole different interpretation. They know that God loves them, will protect them, and will provide for them, but they also know that suffering is also a part of their faith walk. Jesus is their example of a faith walk and part of that partnership or covenant is that we will suffer in our journey, but that suffering will be rewarded. "But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it." 1 Peter 3:14 Often people without faith see that there is no purpose in suffering, while people of faith know God's purposes and expect to be rewarded for their suffering. So bad news is interpreted in a different way. Suffering still causes grief and pain but has purpose in it.

What does it mean to fear God and do His commandments? Fear in this context can also be translated honor, reverence or respect. When we respect someone, we listen to

them and often honor them by responding to what we hear. In Luke Chapter 6:46 Jesus says “Why do you call me Lord and then not do what I say?” In other words, you really don’t respect or honor me, because if you did you would obey me, demonstrating fear, honor or respect. Jesus is saying, I don’t have that position of Lord or God because you don’t give it to me. He then goes on to say in times of trouble, when storms come, if you have built your life on honoring me you will not be shaken. However, if you do not build your life on me when trials or storms come you will be washed away. This is a metaphor of the house built on the sand instead of a solid rock, which represents Jesus and His Kingdom. (Vs 47-49) “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.” Psalm 18:2 So many people build their lives on worldly foundations that in times of difficulty are shaken, collapsed or destroyed. These things are fragile and are not eternal, or will not last. This is easy to see when we lose something as precious as our health, our business or livelihood, but anything that we organize our life around maybe shaken by a storm.

3. How does the Lord build a house? How does the Lord protect a city? There is a myth in our faith that is an either/or myth. It isn’t that it is all God or all us, these verses are about a relationship, a partnership. When a person starts a relationship with God they are praying. They are asking for God’s provision. They are asking for God’s protection. The “I have to do it all,” is all about the me side of the myth. It is the self sufficiency and independent from God side of life. Perhaps the over functioning part of a relationship with God. If I don’t do it, it will never get done. In scripture God often says, “This is my battle and to show you that it is not about you I will fight and leave you out of this battle.” In a battle where the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites and some of the Meunities are coming to conquer Israel, God says that this is His battle and they are called to sing praises rather than fight. God conquers these armies without Israel lifting a finger to fight. On the other end of the continuum a person is dependent to a fault. They are praying but passive and ignoring God’s voice and unwilling to be obedient. Israel in the last Bible story focused on blaming Moses and testing God, which when it came to their part they would not do it. When the spies go into the land that was promised to them by God they shut down. They said that the people of the land were too big and they could not possibly defeat them. So 10 of the 12 spies were governed by fear rather than faith and obedience and because of their passivity they were not allowed to go into the promised land – Number 13-14. They did not fear God and “...they tested me (God) by refusing to listen.” Number 14:22 Hard heartedness is the indifferent heart to the Spirit of God as He speaks to each individual and calls them to trust Him and Obey Him.

The main point of the passage is that we cannot do what God calls us to do without His power in our life. It is not our own identities, our own strength but the identity we have in Christ and the power He supplies as we depend on Him. We are blessed by knowing Him and His ways, that is where the house is built and the city is protected.

This relates to the Coronavirus and the economic down turn in that we are being tested by God. He is calling us to turn to Him and find a deeper relationship with Him. Most of us are distracted and miss His voice and this “Forced Sabbath” invites us to hear His voice and learn to walk in faith and obedience and build a life based on the “rock.”

4. The psalms are full of the promises of God. Psalm 128 starts like Psalm 112. “How happy are those who fear the Lord—all who follow his ways! You will enjoy the fruit of your labor. How happy you will be! How rich your life!” These are promises of God for the person who wants to know Him. Every generation is offered blessings through faith if they grow in their faith and follow His ways. The ways of God call us to understand that it takes trust, risk, and patience to receive God’s blessings. Blessing is another word for happiness. When we receive God’s blessings, we have a broader support system and rewards that bring good things our way. We know that all blessings are only gifts or graces that come and go from the hand of God, but they make life good. All the promises of God are “Yes in Jesus” meaning we have God’s blessings through faith in what Jesus has accomplished for us. They relate to every area of life, family work, church, community and so much more. “The blessings of the Lord makes a person rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.” Proverbs 10:22 Why? Because a believer is not to trust in their wealth, but in the giver of every good and perfect gift. These are His promises to distribute as He wishes when He wishes.

Is there ambiguity in God? He is faithful and true, but He tests us! We may not interpret His testing as a part of His goodness unless we know Him and His ways. Our humanity also expresses emotions that have messages of this is not good. The testing is often seen as evil, especially if we do not understand the heart of God. We also may not understand the devil’s part in bringing evil into our lives and assign it to God. Everything is a win-win in God because “He works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purposes.” Romans 8:28

How does obeying Him demonstrate that we trust Him? “Faith without works is dead” Says James and the writer of Hebrews says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” So obeying God proves that we have faith. Not only that, but it demonstrates that God is good because of the structure that comes through His blessings. What we get to see is that those who trust and obey God gain discipline, character, focus and vision, good relationships, and so many things that validate that God is good. We all still die but our greatest rewards are in heaven, which also takes faith to believe and invest in.