

NCAC Sunday School Class
December 23, 2018
WURMBRAND: *Tortured for Christ*



WURMBRAND

Session 4: Leap Year:

I can overcome trials through knowing and applying the living Word of God.

Introduction

Reflections and thoughts from last week's lesson:

- Our testimonies of love for one another.
- Willing to invest ourselves for the benefit of others.
- We are better together: *What "stupid things" will you do if left alone?*
- Paying the price to continue the work of Christ.

Today's Video: Leap Year

"I received the grace from the Lord and strength to act according to Christ's words. When someone hits you on the cheek, to turn him to the other one. I think it is a supernatural love and a supernatural peace that I could have despite these physical attacks. I was sincerely praying for them that the Lord Jesus would reveal himself as the Lord and Savior and God for them. That was my sincere prayer. The more that I was praying for them the easier, actually, it was." **Petr Jasek, Global Ambassador, The Voice of the Martyrs**

LET'S THINK ABOUT THAT ONE

Petr, a Christian from Czech Republic, had been sentenced to life in prison in Sudan. Held in a crowded cell with a half dozen hardened ISIS fighters and sympathizers, he received brutal beatings - and worse - from his cellmates. *What would be foremost in your thoughts and feelings if you faced what he did?*

We can be sure that some of the same thoughts and feelings we might experience were on Petr's mind as well. But that wasn't all. He remembered God's Word and chose to respond with love rather than anger and retaliation. Like Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand, he fervently prayed for those who tormented him. *In such circumstances, when grave peril looms over every breath we take, what do you think is the secret to remembering and obeying God's Word?*

I. Video Exploration: The Underground Church

A. Video Notes: Themes

- Prepare for the privilege of suffering for Christ.
- A verse for this very day.
 - Petr Jasek - his homecoming delayed.
- Living out God's Word is not about knowing
- Know what God has said.
- Responding to terrifying fear in the strength of God's Word.
- We want to live ... and suffer.

the right answer.

- God gives supernatural love and peace to pray for those who harm us.

What is your foundation for living out your faith?

B. Video Discussion Questions

1. All of us know what it means to prepare for what we expect will happen in the future. We prepare for tests in school. We prepare to celebrate holidays and major life events like birthdays and weddings. We prepare for storms and natural disasters. We prepare for retirement. ***So, what did you think when you learned that Richard and Sabina prepared for what they considered to be inevitable bearing the cross of persecution, imprisonment, and torture because of their faith?***
2. When we face difficult circumstances of any degree, we choose how we respond. We can choose to operate out of our fallen human nature or according to what God has said. ***So, share about a time when you responded to a difficult situation according to your human nature, and as you consider the ways that choice affected how you lived out your faith and represented God's kingdom to others, would you say you "got it right" or did you "get it wrong"?***
3. The prison experiences of Richard Wurmbrand and, more recently, Petr Jasek are a powerful testimony to the power of God's Word at work in the hearts and actions of faithful believers. ***So, in what ways have their experiences as presented in the video changed your perspective on the power of God's Word?***

II. Growing Into A More Biblical Faith Perspective

Our Study Together: *The Power of God's Word to Sustain Us During Difficult Times*

Like the apostle Paul who, undaunted, said to his fellow believers that he was "*ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die ... for the name of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 21:13), Richard and Sabina were ready, too. They armed themselves with the ***Word of God***, and it served them and the cause of Christ well.

1. What does the Bible reveal about the power of God's Word to sustain and guide us during times of crises?

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:15-17 ESV)

*12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom[a] you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and **profitable for***

teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:12-17 ESV)

By what process does the Word of God become effective in the lives of those who desire to live a godly life, and why is this so important?

Richard understood the power words could hold over the mind. He had spent years memorizing and repeating Scripture verses. After years of listening to repetitive Communist slogans, “Communism is good, Christianity is stupid. Give up! Give up!” for seventeen hours a day, he discovered a weapon more formidable than even the brainwashing - *heart-washing*.” He went on to explain, “*The head always obeys the heart, and if Jesus Christ has cleansed the heart, the brain is sure to follow. ‘For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks’ (Luke 6:45)*”.

2. In what ways does God’s Word cleanse the heart from the effects of brainwashing and promote heart-washing?

*1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 May **grace and peace** be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become **partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.** 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with **virtue**, and virtue with **knowledge**, 6 and knowledge with **self-control**, and self-control with **steadfastness**, and steadfastness with **godliness**, 7 and godliness with **brotherly affection**, and brotherly affection with **love.** 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, **they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:1-8 ESV)*

*4 **Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.** 5 **Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.** (Psalm 25:4-5 ESV)*

*30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness; **I set your rules before me.** 31 **I cling to your testimonies, O Lord; let me not be put to shame!** 32 **I will run in the way of your commandments** when you enlarge my heart! (Psalm 119:30-32 ESV)*

*65 You have dealt well with your servant, O Lord, according to your word. 66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments. 67 **Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.** 68 You are good and do good; **teach me your statutes.** 69 The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts; 70 their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law. (Psalm 119:65-70 ESV)*

*92 If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. 93 **I will never forget your precepts,** for by them you have given me life. 94 I am yours; save me, for **I have sought your precepts.** 95 The wicked lie in wait to destroy me, **but I consider your testimonies.** (Psalm 119:92-95 ESV)*

III. You Can Take the Next Step

A. I can overcome trials through knowledge and applying the living Word of God.

With a permanent population of 200,000 men and women of all ages suffering for their faith in Romania prisons and labor camps, Richard knew that he would, at some point, be called to join them. So he spent years preparing himself for that time. He had discovered 366 verses dealing with fear - one for every day of the year, including February 29 for leap year, which was the very day he was abducted.

No matter what challenges, hardships, or torment we face in life, we need God's sustaining word to maintain our walk of faith.

11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11 ESV)

- 1. How many "days" of God's Word do you have hidden safely in your heart and mind?*
- 2. What have you tucked away to sustain you when life becomes more difficult than you ever have imagined?*
- 3. Do you know enough of God's Word to rely on for a month? A week? A day?*
- 4. What are you willing to do to prepare yourself to live out your faith in any circumstance?*
- 5. Will you begin to commit the faith-sustaining and life-sustaining Word of God to memory in your mind and heart?*

B. Recommendation

- Choose your topic(s). Richard chose fear. Consider verses about worry or anxiety, faithfulness, or love for one's enemies.

C. Standing firm on the Word of God:

72 The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.... 97 Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. 98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. 101 I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. 102 I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me. 103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. (Psalm 119:72, 97-104 ESV)