

Gutsy Faith: Hard Conversations with God Journal

Jeff Edmondson

Copyright 2006 by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City

Scripture quotations marked NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*® (NIV®). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1964 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

All undesignated Scripture quotations are paraphrases by the author.

Contents

1. Where Guts Begins
2. Yes, No, or Later?
3. Everything He Asked For
4. "Don't Want to Say No"
5. All You Gotta Do Is Ask
6. Why Couldn't We Do That?
7. In Jesus Name
8. Setting God Up to Look Like a Jerk
9. The Right Perspective--The Right Question
10. Seeking the Heart of God
11. The Heart and Soul of It
12. It's All Good
13. He Heard the Voice
14. Too Tired to Deal with It
15. Purest Delight
16. Bold and Courageous
17. Time to Go on Living
18. Living the Dream



Chapter Focus: Raising the question of what it means to have a gutsy faith.

Thought Questions

- What does it mean to you to have a gutsy faith?
 - Do you think of yourself as a person with a gutsy faith? Why or why not?
 - Name at least five people in the course of your life whom you see as having a gutsy faith.
 - What characteristics do these people possess that you would like to see developed in your life?
- Are those characteristics key to their gutsy faith?
 - If so, why do you think that is the case?
 - If not, why do you want to develop those characteristics in your life?
 - What reasons do you see for why you lack those characteristics?





Scripture Basis: *Read John 11:1-43.*

Chapter Focus: It is never God's desire to say no to His children. On the contrary, it is God's desire to answer yes to our requests.

Thought Questions

- Has God ever answered one of your prayer requests with a no? If so, what was it and what were the circumstances surrounding it?
 - Has God ever answered one of your prayer requests with a yes, but later? What was the prayer request and the circumstances surrounding it?
 - What about a yes answer to a prayer request? What was it and the circumstances surrounding it?
- Describe how you felt after you knew each of God's answers?
 - Why do you think God answers no or later at times?
 - Why doesn't God always answer our prayers with a yes?





Scriptural Basis: *Read Matt. 14:13-23.*

Chapter Focus: The Father *always* gave Jesus everything He asked for.

Thought Questions

- Do you think it was possible for God to answer Jesus with a no? Why or why not?
- If God always answered Jesus' requests with a yes, do you think it's possible for Him to answer all your requests with a yes? Why do you think so?
- In this chapter's block of Scripture, why do you think Jesus sent the disciples ahead of Him while He dismissed the crowds on His own?

- When you've reached the end of a long, stressful day, what do you do to escape?
- Do you think the kind of intimate relationship Jesus shared with the Father is equally possible for you and God? Why or why not?
- What would it take to have that kind of relationship?





Scriptural Basis: Read *Luke 11:1-13*.

Chapter Focus: God truly desires to reveal Himself to us. It is not God's desire to deny us that insight. Jesus promises all we have to do is ask for it, with guts, and will receive.

Thought Questions

- What insights are brought to light for you when the full context of this whole passage is explained?
- Review the rewritten version of the Lord's Prayer. Does it give you a deeper insight into what Jesus might have been saying?

- Have you ever thought of the Lord's Prayer as a prayer for knowing and understanding the will of God, and all the aspects that the will of God might encompass?
- Do you feel you have the right to ask God to reveal His will to you? If not, why?
- When you pray, do you pray more about personal requests or more for God's will to be revealed to you?





Scriptural Basis: *Read Matt. 21:18-22.*

Chapter Focus: When God calls us to do something, if we ask for it to be done, believing in faith, then it actually will happen.

Thought Questions

- How have you viewed the idea of moving mountains if we were called by God to command them to do so? Have you viewed this idea as being metaphorical, as if talking only about personal trials? As something else?
 - Do you think God still calls His people to command seas to be parted, mountains to be moved, or any other such miracles? Why do you believe the way you do?
- Personally, what mountains or barren fig trees stand in the way of God's will being fulfilled for you in light of His kingdom? What mountains stand in the way of your family? Your church? Your work?
 - Identify what fig trees need to shrivel and die before moving forward. Pray about what God wants you to do about them.





Scriptural Basis: *Read Matt. 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-32.*

Chapter Focus: We want to have the guts, the faith for God to use us to move mountains. But if we don't develop our prayer life, it will never happen.

Thought Questions

- Do an honest self-evaluation. How is your prayer life? Strong? Mediocre? Nonexistent?
- When faced with difficult times, do you bury yourself in activities or do you find time to bring them before God?
- If God were to speak to you during your prayer time, have you spent enough time with Him to recognize when it is His voice? Or would you likely dismiss His voice as a passing thought?
- What changes would you have to make in your life in order to spend at least 15 minutes each day in prayer with God?
- What methods do you utilize to verify what you think God is calling you to do? Search the Scripture? Share with close friends in Christ? Is it out of character for how God traditionally works?





Scriptural Basis: *Read Mark 9:38-41; John 16:23-24.*

Chapter Focus: Jesus promises that when we do what we've been told by the Holy Spirit to do in His name, it *will* be granted because we are doing what God wants us to do, not necessarily what we want to do.

Thought Questions

- Have you ever asked for anything in Jesus' name, believing with all your heart that it would happen, and then didn't receive it? Why do you think that happened?
- Do you think God was asking you to pray for it, or do you think your request might have been self-motivated?
- What is the connection between faith and knowing what God is asking you to do in Jesus' name?





Scriptural Basis: *Read 2 Cor. 12.*

Chapter Focus: Asking the right questions is the key to getting a yes from God all the time. The more we recognize the voice of the Spirit in our lives, the easier it becomes to always ask the right questions.

Thought Questions

- Does any of this sound familiar to you? Have you ever asked God to remove something from your life that you've struggled with spiritually?

- Did God remove your thorn? Or did He give you grace instead?

- Does it help you with your personal struggle to know that even Paul had personal issues that God wouldn't just make disappear?

- Have you ever questioned whether God was really listening to you when you asked for something, yet He never gave you the answer you wanted?

- During those times, did you ever blame God for anything, as if He were the cause of the problem?





Scriptural Basis: *Read Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-41; Luke 22:39-46.*

Chapter Focus: Even when we may not hear the voice of the Spirit clearly, we can still ask the right questions, assuming we can truly accept what God's will is for us, even when it differs from what we want, willing acceptance of God's will for us is critical for a gutsy faith

Thought Questions

- Have you ever asked for something in prayer and ended the prayer with "Your will be done"? Did you *really* mean that when you prayed for it?
- If you have ever prayed for God's will to be done regarding any particular situation, and then it didn't turn out as you had hoped it would, were you disappointed that God did not grant your prayer as you thought it should be granted? If so, why?

- Have you ever prayed something earnestly, not knowing what God's will was in the situation? Describe a situation that fits those circumstances.
- What would you like God to do in this situation? How will you feel if it does not turn out that way?
- Would it be better to ask God to reveal His will first, and then ask for the right thing after you hear from God? Why or why not?





Scriptural Basis: *Read Luke 11:1-4.*

Chapter Focus: Without effective prayer—including significant amounts of silence—we will have no faith and our Christianity is fruitless. We will never get to the place where we are always asking the right questions if we never allow God His time to tell us what we need to be asking for.

Thought Questions

- How much time have you spent in prayer lately?

- How much of that prayer time was spent bringing requests to God, and how much time was spent in silence, listening to God?

- Is it difficult for you to be silent in your prayer time? If so, why do you think so?

- Did you hear God speak to you when you prayed? If not, why do you think you didn't?





Scriptural Basis: *Read Mark 12:28-34.*

Chapter Focus: If loving God with all of our being and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves is not where we are at spiritually, the primary prayer we should have when we present our requests to Him should be that God will change our hearts to match up with what He's said in His Word.

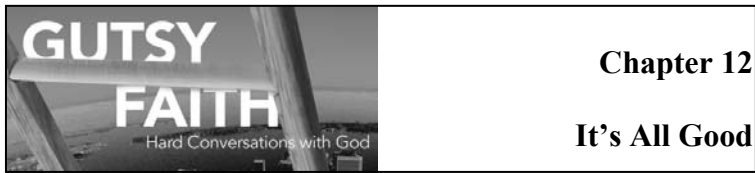
Thought Questions

- What kind of love do you have for God? Passionate? When it's convenient? Out of obligation? You don't know?
- What about your love for your neighbors? Who do you view as your neighbor? Who do you think God views as your neighbor?

- Does it scare you to have to ask God to change your love for Him and for your neighbors so that it matches up to His will? Why or why not?

- What are you willing to give up in order to find that kind of love?





Scriptural Basis: *Read Rom. 8.*

Chapter Focus: God is looking for those who will choose to allow Him to prove just how powerful He actually is. He desperately seeks those who will free Him to display His perfected power during times of weakness.

Thought Questions

- Have there been painful times when you have questioned why God would allow such tragic events to happen? How did you deal with them?
- Have you ever blamed God for tragedy? Why?

- How did you reconcile your blaming God? Or have you reconciled the issue? Do you still blame God? Why?
- During your personal times of pain, who have you turned to for strength and healing? Family? Friends? Other? God?
- If you have blamed God for your tragedy, have you ever considered that it might have been caused by the enemy of your soul rather than God? If not, why haven't you?





Scriptural Basis: *Read 1 Kings 19.*

Chapter Focus: Sometimes discerning God's voice from other influences can be difficult. During those times you should always compare what we think is God's will to: 1) His written Word; 2) the historical interpretation of Scripture; 3) logical rationale; 4) experiential understanding.

Thought Questions

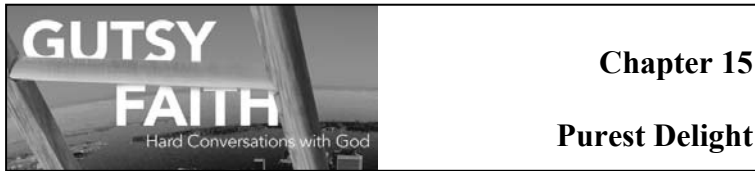
- Have you ever found yourself, like Elijah, in such a desperate situation that you ran instead of trusting God to take care of the details? Describe the situation and what happened.
- How do you know when God has arrived on the scene and is talking to you?

- When you feel God might be calling you to something, what process do you use to determine if it is God calling you or otherwise?

- Have you ever acted on what you thought was God calling you to do something, only to find out it wasn't God after all? Describe the situation and what the outcome was. What clues did you have along the way that it might not have been God?

- Are you reluctant to respond to God's call? Why do you think that is? What insecurities do you have that keep you from acting with more guts in your spiritual walk?





Scriptural Basis: *Read Ps. 37:4.*

Chapter Focus: Amidst the noise the world throws at us and all that wars against the kingdom of heaven, it's a safe bet we won't hear God when He speaks. God calls us to put away the debauchery of the world and embrace the serenity of the Almighty. If we will not do that we will always struggle hearing God speak to us.

Thought Questions

- What do you think it means to delight yourself in the Lord?

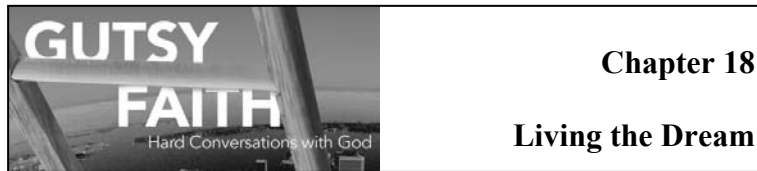
- Can you honestly say that you delight in the Lord? If not, why?

- During your times with God, in addition to your quiet time just listening, how much time do you spend delighting in God?

- What changes in your spiritual walk would you need to make to begin loving God for the sheer joy of it? What obstacles stand in the way of you doing that?

- Do you view God as being a vengeful God or a loving God? If you see Him as vengeful, describe why.





Scriptural Basis: *Read Gen. 41.*

Chapter Focus: Release what fears you may have, what insecurities might be holding you back from a gutsy moving forward with God's plan for your life.

Thought Questions

- Write down your wildest dreams for your life in the context of the kingdom of God.
- Do you see God moving you in the direction of fulfilling that dream? Do you believe that dream is God-given or self-motivated?
- What barriers stand in the way of those dreams being achieved? What would God need to do in order for those dreams to be fulfilled?
- Examine your dreams. Are they in alignment with what the Bible teaches? With the character, will, and nature of God? If not, are you willing to let go of these dreams so God can give you new ones?

