

# A Sure Foundation

The beliefs that we build our lives on

## SURVIVING THE DOLDRUMS

MONTH 7

WEEK 3

READ:

Matthew 13-19

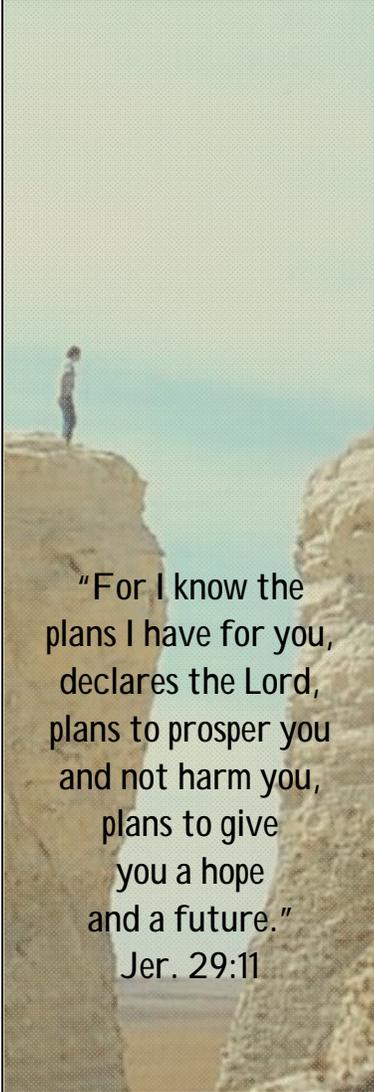
Like a sailing ship with no wind in its sails, the doldrums leave us drifting without direction. A crisis demands a direct challenge to our faith. It gets our attention and cries for a decisive definition of our belief. But the doldrums, that melancholy, stagnant state where there is little movement or growth, can sneak upon us with the slithering stealth of a serpent. It is in those periods of time when God seems to fall unnervingly silent.

Surviving the doldrums can challenge even the most valiant of the faithful. Often we have seen the extraordinary hand of God, and then.....nothing. It's as if we have forgotten how to see God in the in between times. While waiting for not-sure-what to happen not-sure-when, we can miss Him in the everyday.

The Jews were waiting for the Messiah for a long, long time. So long, in fact, that many had lost their expectancy. When Christ finally came, they missed it. They didn't expect it to happen in a way so... normal.

That happens to me too. There are the times of difficulty and the seasons where crisis seems to wash up in waves. I am extra watchful for what God is doing in those times. Sometimes the manner in which things work out seem downright miraculous. God has my attention then just like the crowds that saw Jesus heal the lame and drive out demons. Then there are the plain old normal times when nothing is going especially good, or especially bad; just humdrum life happening day after day until the day comes that I wonder where God has gone. Is God really present among the laundry and bills and dailyness of life? Is this really the way that God meant it to be? Why doesn't He show me His mighty hand? Am I really so certain of Him? The subtle little questions can sneak in to discourage me before I even know they are there. Before I know it I'm drifting in the doldrums.

That is when spiritual disciplines become my mainstay. My every thought has to be taken captive and made obedient to Christ. Even when I don't feel God's presence, I chose to talk to Him, seek Him, and ask Him to guide me through the dark listless days. For faith is hope that the winds of the Spirit will surely come again.



"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."  
Jer. 29:11

## DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

There is no more precious light than even the tiniest flicker in a dark room. Perhaps that is the purpose for those dark times, as St. John of the Cross put it “the dark night of the soul.” These times are often, if not always, essential in our spiritual development to move toward a “divine union with God”

If you have ever been deep within a cave when they turn off all the lights, you know how disorienting darkness can be. It does something to us. We lose sense of direction, and we lose our confidence. We don't boldly step anywhere because we can't see where we are stepping. Both real and imagined dangers stop us in our tracks. We feel abandoned and alone. That is when we are most challenged to trust. Faith moves from a reasonable trust in the God of all good things, to a full out, treacherously foolish trust in a God that is not seen, felt or heard. Can you still trust in the God that all of your senses deny? Has He become so entwined into your being that you can trust His presence even in a spiritual blackout?

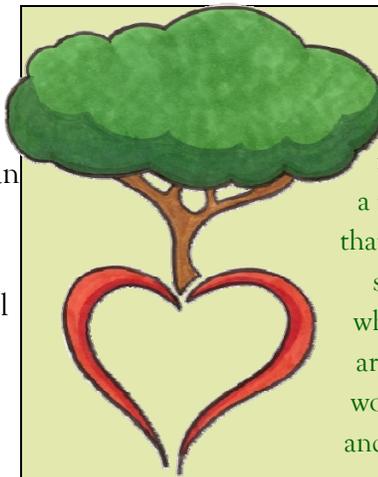
Are you ready to find out?

## ALL DRIED UP Matt. 13 and 14

A plant with shallow roots is no match for a dry spell. Shallow Christianity doesn't have much staying power either. We have all seen the new Christian who shoots up and shows tremendous growth and perhaps even bears fruit, but then over time withers away. The root system had not been established well enough to last over the long haul. Perhaps we have even seen that in ourselves.

God plants the seed, but do we have a part in preparing the soil? What makes the ground good? What is needed for deep roots?

These are the questions that we need to ask ourselves as we determine the rules, or values that we will choose to live by. We have all formed habits, but are they habits that help us or hurt us? Sin allowed to tread on our hearts beats down a hardened path. Distractions, even “good” ones can choke out a growing faith. Weeds and drought can wreck havoc. Being intentional about caring for our spiritual health has been called rules for living or spiritual disciplines, but I like Ruth Haley Barton's use of the term ‘sacred rhythms’ to describe the attitudes and habits that will till the soil of our hearts so that the roots of our faith



“But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

Jer. 17:7,8

will have the opportunity to grow deep. (Barton 147) This is the training that puts us in the position where we will not wither in times of drought. Dr. Bruce Demarest describes it as “the shaping of our inner character and outer conduct in cooperation with the work of the Spirit, so that we are gradually being conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ.” (Demarest 38) So, what are those habits that will make way for God's transformation in our lives? What are the rhythms that need to be well established in our lives that will help our faith endure and grow, even in the dark and dry spells? .....

**JESUS SAYS...** Matt. 13-19

What does a calloused heart prevent people from doing? (13:15) \_\_\_\_\_

How large is the kingdom of heaven? (13:31-33) \_\_\_\_\_

Where is it hidden? (13:44-46) \_\_\_\_\_

How can we value it? \_\_\_\_\_

How did Jesus handle his grief over John's death? (14:12-13) \_\_\_\_\_

What did Jesus do with an ordinary lunch? (14:15-21) \_\_\_\_\_

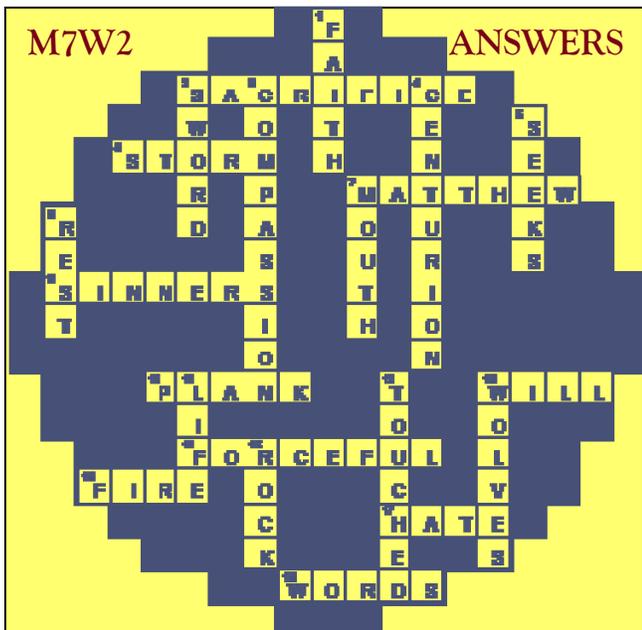
What happened on an ordinary trip across the lake? (14:22-33) \_\_\_\_\_

Is there really anything ordinary when God's kingdom is near? \_\_\_\_\_

How can 16:24-28 help us through the doldrums? \_\_\_\_\_

How can we see the kingdom of God? \_\_\_\_\_

How had the Pharisees missed the point about marriage? (19:1-12) \_\_\_\_\_



**WHERE IS YOUR HEART?** Matt. 15-19

Are there times that you pay God lip service while your heart remains distant? \_\_\_\_\_

According to 15:8,9 what does this make worship? \_\_\_\_\_

What connection could this have with experiencing the doldrums? \_\_\_\_\_

What did the religious leaders ask to see from Jesus in 16:1? \_\_\_\_\_

How did Jesus respond to them? \_\_\_\_\_

How can we keep in mind the things of God instead of the things of men? \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways are we to become like little children? (18) \_\_\_\_\_

What is required for eternal life if we plan to earn it? (19:16-30) \_\_\_\_\_

What is required if we chose to accept God's grace? \_\_\_\_\_

**WANT TO READ WHAT I READ?**

**ALL DRIED UP** p.2

Barton, Ruth Haley. Sacred Rhythms. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Demarest, Bruce. Satisfy Your Soul. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1999.

**ALSO READ:**

Pratt, Lonni Collins, and Father Daniel Homan. Benedict's Way. Chicago: LoyolaPress, 2000.



For questions or comments, contact me at: [kayannausheran@hotmail.com](mailto:kayannausheran@hotmail.com)  
For more studies, visit me at: <http://www.thelightedjourney.com>

