

When the going gets tough

Notes on the Bible readings

- In this passage from Matthew, we see Jesus preparing his disciples for their mission. He warns them of the threats and challenges they are likely to face. They are called to go out and take on their mission completely reliant on God, in order that they might build up trust and relationship with him.

- Jesus warns that following him will not be easy, but that God will always be with them. He tells them not to fear all these things, including death, as no one is powerful enough to destroy both body and soul. God values us enough to know how many hairs we have on our heads, and so will protect and keep us.

- Being a disciple of Jesus doesn't mean that all our problems will vanish, but our challenge is to continue striving to be a disciple even through the hardship, knowing that Jesus will walk alongside us. We are valued by him and rewarded through relationship with him.

Up and down

How do you make lifestyle choices?

Loyalty comes with a cost – e.g. following a sports team will have highs and lows; financial investments 'may go down as well as up'.

Look through a selection of newspapers and magazines, and/or search the internet, to find examples of lifestyle offers and choices that are designed to be appealing and draw us in. How do you respond? How do you make lifestyle choices and life changing decisions?

Questions for reflection

- ▶ How would you feel about facing a challenge like this?
- ▶ How would you finish the sentence 'When the going gets tough...'?
- ▶ How can you support one another through the challenging realities of being a disciple of Jesus?



A prayer of approach

O Lord, we enter into your steadfast love, asking that you will respond to our prayers; we trust in your abundant mercy and ask that you will come to us.

O Lord, make your presence known to us; draw near to us; redeem us, set us free; for we seek to be your faithful disciples. Amen.

A prayer for others

We pray for those whom you have called to service far from their homes – doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, and many more... We pray for those who serve you by telling your story – those who teach, lead assemblies, speak at meetings, preach the gospel, and many more...

We pray for our own discipleship, that we may face our challenges with courage and help to establish your promised kingdom. And we pray for all whose service, often at risk to themselves, is helping us, helping the whole world, in its battle against the spread and consequences of the corona virus pandemic. We pray, Lord, that you will protect and bless them all. Amen.

A personal prayer

*Praise God who made me.
Praise Jesus who has called me.
Praise the Spirit who empowers me. Amen.*

Live your faith

Find out about some persecuted Christians (e.g. through the work of Open Doors, in over 70 countries). Consider how what you learn can inspire or help you in living out your faith – especially 'when the going gets tough'.