



Welcome

Message: Defiant Optimism
Dr. Lance Watson, Senior Pastor

PRAYER: The future belongs to you God. Thank You that our joy is not anchored in our circumstances, but in Who You are. Even when the fig tree does not blossom, when the fields yield no food, or when our plans and expectations fall short, we will still praise You. Thank You for being the God of our salvation—our constant source of hope, strength, and peace when everything around us feels uncertain. When our own strength fails, You make our feet like the feet of a deer, enabling us to tread safely upon the high places and navigate life's steep, difficult terrain with confidence. Teach us to hold tightly to Your faithfulness today, giving thanks not just for what You give, but simply for who You are. In Jesus' name, Amen.

ICEBREAKER: What is one simple thing that brought you peace or joy this past week, even if other things didn't go according to plan?

INTRODUCTION: Grappling with deep national crisis and impending Babylonian invasion, the Book of Habakkuk journeyed from honest questioning to unshakable faith, culminating in one of Scripture's most powerful declarations of trust. Rather than ignoring hardship or demanding immediate relief, Habakkuk shows us how genuine faith shifts its focal point from external circumstances—like barren crops and empty stalls—to the unchanging character of God. Habakkuk reveals that true hope isn't the absence of trouble, but a defiant optimism to rejoice in the God of our salvation, who gives us the strength and agility to tread securely even across life's steepest and most unstable terrain.

BIBLE STUDY: Read Habakkuk 3:17-19 (NKJV): Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **What was your biggest takeaway from the message?** What's one thing you learned? What questions came to mind as you listened to the message? What points did you find most insightful?
2. **Reframe Your Hardship:** Habakkuk lists several empty fields and barren trees, yet chooses to rejoice anyway. What is one area in your life right now where things aren't "producing" as you hoped, and how can we actively look for God's goodness in the middle of it?
3. **Remember Your Hope:** It's easy to feel optimistic when everything goes according to plan, but Habakkuk's joy was rooted in who God is rather than what was happening around him. What helps you reset your focus back onto God's character when daily circumstances threaten to drain your optimism?
4. **Reset Your Steps:** Verse 19 mentions God making our feet "like the feet of a deer" to navigate steep, uneven places. Looking back, what is a past difficulty where God gave you unexpected resilience or strength, and how can that memory give you confidence for the future?

THE SAINT PAUL'S BAPTIST CHURCH
GROW | PRAY | SERVE



WWW.MYSPBC.ORG • 804.643.4000

5. **Reclaim Your Joy:** Choiceless optimism is a habit we cultivate day by day. What is one practical routine or mindset shift (like a daily gratitude practice or standard prayer focus) you can start this week to choose joy before challenges arise?

LIVE IT OUT: This week, when faced with an unexpected setback or disappointment, pause immediately and name three specific ways God remains good and faithful in your life right now.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Take this time to share group announcements. Announcements can be found at www.myspbc.org. You can also “find, follow and like” our Facebook page at facebook.com/myspbc. Turn on your notifications. Remember to subscribe to our YouTube channel!

CELEBRATIONS: Take this time to share praise reports (e.g. answered prayers, birthdays, anniversaries, promotions).

PRAYER REQUESTS & PRAYER: Take this time to share prayer requests. Close with prayer.

THE SAINT PAUL'S BAPTIST CHURCH
GROW | PRAY | SERVE



WWW.MYSPBC.ORG • 804.643.4000



We Care!

NOTICE: As a small group leader, we depend on you to show members that we care. Here's a list of resources to help you.

FOR PRAYER:

CALL: 804.463.2472

EMAIL: prayer@myspbc.org.

FOR COUNSELING:

CALL: 804.643.6177

EMAIL: care@myspbc.org

TO REQUEST A HOSPITAL VISIT:

CALL: 804.304.3890 (For Emergencies)

EMAIL: ecare@myspbc.org.

TO REQUEST FUNERAL SUPPORT:

CALL: 804.304.3890 (Pastor On Call)

EMAIL: ecare@myspbc.org.

TO FIND A SUPPORT GROUP:

CALL: 804.643.6177

EMAIL: care@myspbc.org.

TO REQUEST EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE:

CALL: 804.643.4000

EMAIL: emergencyassistance@myspbc.org.

TO CONTACT MY LIFE STAGE PASTOR: CALL: 804.643.4000 and Press 1 for the Dial by Name Directory

EMAIL:

- Imagination (0-10): Vernita Williams: Vernita.Williams@myspbc.org
- SMB (11-19): Martina Jones-Smith: Martina.Jones-Smith@myspbc.org
- Dreamchasers (20-29): Juan Shackelford: juan.shackelford@myspbc.org
- Aspire (30-39): Lance Watson, Jr.: lance.watsonjr@myspbc.org
- Fusion (40-49): Michelle Townsend: michelle.townsend@myspbc.org
- Encore (50-59): Lisa Johnson: lisa.johnson@myspbc.org.
- Prime Time (60-69): Maceo Freeman: maceo.freeman@myspbc.org
- Refiners (70+): Roscoe Jones: roscoe.jones@myspbc.org

*GPS is a study guide based on the weekend message. The purpose of this guide is to assist small groups in study.
Previous GPS Guides are available online at www.myspbc.org.*



Small Group Leader Guide

Would you like to START or JOIN a Small Group at Saint Paul's?

Most existing groups are open to new group members, and new groups begin on a regular basis. If you have friends in a small group, ask about joining their group. If you are new to Saint Paul's and are looking for a place to connect, please feel free to contact us and we will do our best to help you find the right group.

Leader Tips:

The GPS document is a guide for discussion. Don't feel like you must use every question. Some questions will take a while to work through while others will be over in a few seconds!

1. Don't teach the lesson. The lesson was taught on the weekend. Just ask questions and let everyone else talk.
2. Let other people ask questions. It's OK to go "off topic" for a while. Sometimes those conversations are more interesting anyway!
3. Have fun. Relationships, not curriculum, are the heartbeat of our small groups. So, have fun with the people in your group.

Agenda for a Small Group Gathering

Gathering Time

Take 5-10 minutes to welcome everyone, catch up and if planned, share some food!

Discussion Time

Here's a suggested format:

1. **Ice Breaker** – Lighthearted icebreaker question (5-10 min.)
2. **Discussion** - Discussion time, Bible study, application challenge (30-40 min.)
3. **Prayer** – Prayer requests and praying for one another (10-20 min.)
4. **Planning** – Remind the group of how we serve together (e.g. usher, sing, greet, pray, etc.)