



These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

**IT REALLY MATTERS HOW WE DETERMINE WHAT REALLY MATTERS. DISCIPLES TAKE SERIOUSLY THE EVALUATION OF PRIORITIES. IN THIS SERIES WE WILL LET SCRIPTURE INFORM OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT REALLY COUNTS.**

**1** Following Jesus doesn't mean we will suffer less than those who do not follow Jesus. It means we should suffer better. **Read James 1:2-4.** What is the difference between trials we encounter and trials we create?

**2 YOU CAN count on trials... so make your trials count.** James does not say "if" but "when." Trials are not an elective for any of us; they are a required course. To "count" or "consider" is a decision, a determination of the will. How do we steer our thoughts toward joy when we are in the midst of suffering?

**3 MAKE SUFFERING COUNT... What can I learn? Read James 1:5.** Everyone wants to know "why?" when they go through trials. But God does not always promise an answer to "why?". What He does promise is wisdom. What can suffering teach us that will help us follow Jesus better?

**4 MAKE SUFFERING COUNT... How can I grow? James** says those who suffer well are well on their way to maturity. God values growth in character over increase in comfort. **Read Romans 5:3-4 and 2 Corinthians 12:8-9.** How do trials and weaknesses grow our faith and character?

**5 MAKE SUFFERING COUNT... Who can I bless?** Times of suffering give others the opportunity to minister to us, but they can also provide us with opportunities to minister to others. **Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.** Share an example of a time when you received a blessing when you were hurting. Then share a time where a trial actually turned into an opportunity to bless someone else.

**6 YOU CAN count on God TO MAKE your suffering count. Read 1 Peter 1:6-7.** God promises to make our suffering count. Why can we trust Him to do this? What does God know about suffering, and why should that encourage us?

**7** Rick suggested three prayers when going through a trial: "Teach me." "Grow me." or "Use me." Which one do you need to pray most right now?





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**1** Many people often have a strong suspicion that they will not reach their eternal destination. What are the factors that cause so many Christians to be unsure of their eternal salvation?

**2** **DON'T COUNT ON *being good enough as the basis for your salvation.*** Read **Romans 3:10**. Why is the “be good enough” path to salvation a journey that can never reach its goal? What are some of the damaging consequences of trying?

**3** If religion could get you safely to your eternal home, the law of Moses was as good a road as one could travel. Paul thought he had everything on that road, and then one day he was blinded going down that road and realized he had nothing. Read **Philippians 3:6-9**. What happened to change Paul’s mind about what really counts? How does this relate to your spiritual journey?

**4** **BUT TAKE COUNT *of how God has always saved people.*** Read **Romans 4:3-5**. Paul is quoting Genesis 15:6, one of the most important doctrinal verses in the Bible. It is also quoted in Galatians and James. What do you think it means when it says “Abraham believed God”? How does that impact your daily relationship with God?

**5** Read **Romans 4:18-24**. What does Paul mean when he says Abraham’s faith never wavered? Aren’t there times in his life when he struggled to trust God like we probably do? With that in mind, what kind of faith does God look for?

**6** **SO COUNT ON *Christ’s goodness being credited to your account when you believe.*** Rick pointed out that salvation is not just being forgiven of our sins, but being credited with the righteous life of Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). Why is this important, and how does it affect our confidence?

**7** **Take God’s faithfulness *into account.*** Read **Jude 24**. Trust that God’s strength can overcome your weakness. Our salvation is sure because God is sure. How can we let these truths penetrate our hearts and impact how we live?





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- 1 **“DOES SIN *not* count?”** Read Romans 6:1. Many conclude that the message of grace means that sin doesn’t matter. Why do they think that, and what wrong responses do they want to make in light of what they think?
- 2 **Read Romans 6:2-4.** Paul’s response to the charge that grace treats sin lightly was to remind people of their baptisms. Why does he do this? What about our union with Christ’s death and resurrection should challenge the idea that grace means sin doesn’t matter?
- 3 **“TAKE YOUR *baptism into account.*”** Read Romans 6:5-7. Paul insists that participation in Christ’s death and resurrection brings liberation from sin. Why is this so? Why is it important to realize that Christians are more than “just forgiven”?
- 4 **Read Romans 6:8-11.** Just because something is true doesn’t mean that it is counted as true. What would keep Christians from believing that they are truly free from the bondage of any sin? What lies must the Christian confront if they are to truly enjoy their new life in Christ?
- 5 **“*Count yourselves DEAD TO SIN!*”** Read Romans 6:12-14. While in these bodies we will never be sinless; however, we can and should expect to sin less. What are some examples of how people offer themselves to sin? How do some Christians justify or make allowances for staying in bondage?
- 6 **COUNT YOURSELVES... *refuse sin’s offer.*** As saints we are temples of the Holy Spirit, but some of us are too lenient about allowing Satan on the property. Are there places in your life where the old master is still calling the shots? What are some things you can do to refuse sin’s offer in your life each day?
- 7 **COUNT YOURSELVES... *offer what counts.*** Read Romans 12:1. Holiness is more than saying “no” to sin. It is saying “yes” to God. How can we offer every part of ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness? What is one practical thing you can do this week?
- 8 Testimonies of struggle and victory are powerful ways to encourage holiness in one another. Share a story of an area of your life where God is helping you experience freedom.





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**1** Distraction keeps us from focusing on what counts. Rick pointed out that *“the struggle for most Christians is not intentional wickedness but unintentional wastefulness.”* Do you agree with that statement? If so, why? Have you experienced this recently in your life?

**2** It really matters that we stay focused on what really matters. **Galatians 5:6** says, **“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”** How does this statement help answer the question **“What is the very best use of me?”**

**3 NOTHING COUNTS without love. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.** Does Paul’s position here seem a bit extreme to you? Why or why not? Why wouldn’t acts of charity or gains in knowledge count for something even if love was not involved?

**4 LOVE COUNTS MOST when it’s most difficult. Read Luke 6:32-35.** We should not give ourselves much credit for love that does not take much effort. What is the difference between the way most people love and the way followers of Jesus should love? And what motivates love that might not be returned?

**5** Unconditional love is never wasted even if it is never returned. Why is love never wasted even if it’s not appreciated?

**6 YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT on God’s love.** Why is it so hard to trust in the unfailing love of God? **Read 2 Thessalonians 3:5 & Ephesians 3:18.** What role does prayer play in helping us?

**7** Keeping ourselves in God’s love will bring out the best in us, and we will be able to give the best of us to what really counts. So, how can we “keep ourselves in God’s love” on a daily basis as stated in Jude 21?

