**Trusting God Through Hard Times**

**Rebecca**

Good morning and welcome to our family service, we would especially like to welcome any visitors here this morning. We are going to encourage people in from coffee and begin our worship of God by singing together 10, 000 Reasons.

**Hymn** *10,000 Reasons*

**Rebecca**

Thank you, you are in fine voice this morning.

Today’s announcements are available in the yellow sheet which you should have received as you came in. Can I please draw your attention to…..

Most importantly, it is ……… birthday on ………… How old will you be ………..? Lets sing Happy Birthday to ……..

**Happy Birthday**

I hope you have a lovely day ……..

As we begin let us commit our service to God in prayer.

Father, thank you that you have brought each of us safely to this place.
We gladly surrender our lives to you in worship and praise.
As we gather we remember those who are not with us today -
For those who are sick we ask for healing,
And for those away from us we ask for your blessing to be on them.
We invite Your Holy Spirit to move freely amongst us.
Come dwell in each of our hearts.
Equip us, challenge us, comfort us, teach us.
Inspire us as we learn more about your ways.
Father, as we meet now may we open our hearts and minds to encounter your grace.
We ask all this in the wonderful name of Jesus.

Amen.

Today’s service is about Trusting God in Hard Times, the YF are going to be sharing with you what we have been learning about over the past few weeks during Breakfast@Jesus. We have looked at what the Bible has to say about this, including looking at how Jesus trusted God when he experienced hardships. We then thought about how we can apply this to our own hard times or have experienced God during difficulty.

What was most important was that God is always with us and cares about us no matter how big or small the difficulty is, whether it is everyday grumblings at school or work or much bigger life changing issues. I know that when I was younger, and my cat ran away that I was sad and scared but praying with my mum brought me comfort and helped me to put my trust in God to help me through this.

While we are singing the next hymn, in preparation for the first activity can I please ask you to think of tough times and write them on separate pieces of white paper that were on your chair. This can be personal tough times or something more generic. It would help to have as many pieces of paper as possible and repeats are OK. These will be collected by member of the YF during the hymn.

We are now going to sing again and then Dan, Jack & Jake will come and lead you in the activity. Lets all stand together to sing Strength Will Rise.

*(All YF members collect papers and place in the game area whilst the hymn is being sung)*

**Hymn** Strength Will Rise

**Dan**

We need two teams of school age children to take part in our game. Can volunteers come to the front?

*(Split the volunteers into two reasonably equal in ability groups, some YF members might need to volunteer to boost numbers or if only very young children volunteer. Appoint one team as Team Dan and the other as Team Jack, Jake is referee to stop cheating!)*

Round one of the game is to try and walk across without standing on any of the pieces of paper. One point for every team member that manages it.

**Round 1**

*(No-one should manage it, you may need to influence results if someone gets sneaky)*

**Jake**

As you can see it was impossible to make your way across without standing on the paper. This is just like life, it is impossible to make your way through life without experiencing tough times, so we need to find ways to deal with them. We can try and do this on our own but trusting God during tough times can make them much more bearable and he helps us get through them.

In Matthew 26:36-46 we see Jesus experiencing a very hard time just before he is arrested. Marcus will read this to us now.

**Marcus**

**Matthew 26:36-46**

**Jake**

If, like Jesus, we **PRAY**, have **FAITH** and seek **COMFORT** *(hold up each “stepping stone” as you say them)* then we have the stepping stones provided by God to help us traverse the tough times.

**Jack**

In round 2 of the game each team will have two sets of God’s stepping stones that they can use to help them get across. However, someone needs to be standing on the stepping stones once they are put down or they will drift away and you’ll lose them. God’s stepping stones are very robust, however, and can be used by more than one person at a time. Again, one point for each team member that makes it across and bonus 5 points for the winning team but 2 points lost for every stepping stone that drifts away.

**Round 2**

*(Make sure to take stones away, although do offer a bit of advice and support if needed. Keep a note of the scores)*

**Jake**

And the score for Team Jack is …… and Team Dan is ….. Therefore, the winners are Team ………. Well done and thanks for taking part, you can sit down now.

As you can see God’s stepping stones provided help to get through the tough times but if we let go of them, they drift away. God doesn’t take away his love and support from us, it is us that drift and we stop praying, we don’t keep faith and trust God and we don’t look to him or his church for comfort. Without God it gets much harder. So, as you head of to Sunday School remember that when you are having a hard time pray, trust God and look for comfort from God and your church because God is always there for us and is always faithful.

We are going to sing together Great is Thy Faithfulness, a song all about God being Faithful to us. Sunday school teachers can leave at the start and children can leave at the start of the third verse. The collection will also be taken during the hymn.

**Hymn** Great is Thy Faithfulness

**Dan**

As we can see on the floor at the front here, we all experience hard times. Whether it’s the relatively run-of‐the‐mill relational issues that plague us all or bigger issues such as divorce, illness or the death of a loved one, we all have our share of struggles. Knowing where to turn in troubled times can be a challenge. How refreshing, then, to know that Jesus spoke extensively on the challenges we face, and how we can bring our cares to God in trying times.

The first thing we looked at when considering this topic of Trusting God in Hard Times was “A God Who Listens”. We thought carefully about how we communicate with God, especially during difficulties. We talked about how there are some emotions that we are less likely to pray about like being angry with God, disappointed, disengaged and a whole host of other negative feelings.

However, relationships are built on honesty and looking at how Jesus prays in Gethsemane sets us an example of being honest with God. Jesus didn’t shy away from being scared or worried, even saying that he didn’t want to be crucified if there could be another way. How often are we that honest?

God already knows what it on our hearts and minds, when we hold back from praying about how we really feel it is only ourselves that we are trying to fool. Being honest in our prayers also helps us to be honest with ourselves. God, as Jesus, knows what it is to suffer and to struggle, he knows how we feel. When you experience tough times, you should express your emotions to God in real, honest ways; reconsider the way you communicate with God, challenge yourself to embrace a more honest dialogue with Him.

We are now going to spend some time in quiet reflection and prayer, sharing our honest thoughts and emotions with God. The blue pieces of paper represent our prayers, you may wish to write a short prayer or even just a word but feel free to leave it blank and keep your prayer between you and God. When you are ready please come and scatter them over the white paper at the front.

**Music from Praise Group** *Faithful One*

**Jack**

After prayer we thought about keeping faith in hard times, how to continue trusting God’s ability to deliver us from the difficult time or help us persevere. This can be difficult in itself if you are experiencing the negative emotions Dan talked about but add to this that as a society, we are very self-reliant, thinking we can always fix it ourselves.

The following sections from the story of Lazarus helped us to think about God’s faithfulness to us.

**John 11:1-3, 17-27, 38-44**

Jesus didn’t act by Martha’s agenda and yet her faith remained strong, she trusted Jesus. Her faith helped her persevere and, in this case,, she was delivered from her difficult time.

Keeping faith can be hard when it feels like prayer has gone unanswered and the hard time your experiencing doesn’t get better or work out as you want it too. Rachel and Lynne both talked with us about difficult times in their lives, Rachel about having a brain tumour soon after Rosie was born and Lynne about losing a child. Neither situation worked out as they would have wanted, and they still find them hard today, but they put their trust in God even when they couldn’t understand why these things were happening. Trusting that God would give them the strength to persevere.

As we sang earlier Great is They Faithfulness, God is and always will be faithful to us, his love and strength are never failing.

The orange pieces of paper represent having faith in tough times. Again, you may wish to write something on the paper or leave it blank. As we sing In Christ Alone can I invite you to scatter your orange pieces of paper at the front.

**Hymn** In Christ Alone

**Hannah**

**After prayer and faith, we considered what do we run to for comfort?** Usually, it is people.  If we am sad or scared or worried or discouraged I go to family or friends. But people are not the only source of comfort we turn to, some seek comfort in their money, retail therapy, food, work, or sleep. Others try to escape through books or movies. And sadly, some pick dangerous ways of coping by using drugs and alcohol.

There is nothing wrong with seeking comfort from others. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us that we are to encourage each other. It is also fine to watch a funny movie to make us laugh when we are feeling a bit down. But we can’t rely on earthly things to bring real lasting comfort. Once the friends leave or the movie is over, we are right back in the midst of our suffering. **Earthly things can only comfort us in part, there is a place we can go to find real lasting comfort.**

We have a God who encourages, refreshes, strengthens, aids, assists, and is an ever-present help in the time of need. The ways that God chooses to comfort are not always the same. He may deliver you or remove the cause of the affliction, or He may comfort you with scripture, with words giving you a hope for the future. He also uses other Christians to share their faith, to support and strengthen you by spiritual, emotional and practical means. The source of all comfort is God, no matter what channel He chooses to use.

The following passages consistently repeat God’s desire for us to know his peace.

**John 14:25-27**

**John 16:33**

**Matthew 11:28-30**

On your last piece of paper, hopefully a yellow one, can you write about when you have known God’s comfort or ask for God’s comfort now. Again, if you would rather leave it blank and keep the thoughts between you and God that is fine. Whilst the band play could you scatter these at the front.

**Music from Praise Group** *Faithful One*

**Scott**

We lastly thought about what we do when the tough time passes. When God has delivered us or helped us to persevere. We should be thankful and praise God for his faithfulness to us.

In the following passage we hear about someone being thankful even though they have suffered greatly for some time.

**Luke 17:11-19**

As the paper at the front shows, we all experience hard times in life, we can’t avoid them. However, as the kids game showed God’s stepping stones of prayer, faith and comfort can help us through if we let them. Just as all our coloured papers cover the white paper, God will surround us with love and strength to keep us going. For that we can be truly thankful.

Let us pray,

Thank You Lord that You are my refuge and my strength in hard times and an ever-present helper in times of trouble. Help me to be honest in my prayers and keep my relationship with you real and true.

I know that You are the only, all-powerful God and that there is nothing that is too difficult in my life for You to deal with – nor is there any obstacle in my path that is so insurmountable that I cannot cross – knowing that You are by my side. Help me to be faithful and trust in you.

Give me I pray Your strength to face today’s hard and troubled. Help me to seek and accept your comfort.

Thank YOU that my strength comes from You and that Your grace is enough for all the situations that will cross my daily path – not only for today but for the rest of my journey through life.

Thank you, Father, for your faithfulness. Help me to remember to be thankful and praise you for all that you do in our tough times.

Amen

Can we please now close our service by singing together Blessed Be Your Name

**Hymn** Blessed Be Your Name