



SERIES: A Long Distance

Group Guide Week 1 (for the week of March 7th, 2021)

SERIES OVERVIEW:

Most of us experience life from failure to failure, mishap to mishap, or crisis to crisis. It's understandable. Life, particularly modern life, has its fair share of difficulties. It's hard to feel like we are headed any place positive. But, what if we could? What if we could experience life as a beautifully unified story that provides just how much God loves us? In this series, we will be discussing God's masterful plan known as discipleship. The ability to stay consistently disciplined in order to experience more of who God is and who he's made us to be.

Big Idea: Proper training removes panic and increases obedience.

Scripture: Psalm 121

“We aim to unapologetically train the panic out of people.”- Austin Roberts

Discussion:

If you missed Sunday's message here is WEEK ONE RECAP:

We are not the first people attempting to follow God with our lives. There are, thankfully, lessons to be learned from those who have gone before us. However, understanding the training they have passed down to us can be, well, difficult. This week, Austin kicked off our new series, A Long Distance, by creatively taking us through the life-giving instructions of Psalm 121. What's the first step in being a good disciple of Jesus? **Limiting distractions** no matter how much they call for our attention.

Austin opened up this discussion digging into the “*Art of Distraction: one of the most deadly arrows in the enemies arsenal- distraction.*”

- **Distracted by PAIN**
- **Distracted by PLEASURE**
- **Distracted by POWER**
- **Distracted by PEOPLE**

We are distracted by these things because of legitimate fears that we have from our past. Fears that have been a part of our lives, even if we had no realization until now.

We are in danger of going against the will of God, and not even knowing it because of these distractions. Every distraction has the potential to replace God’s position in our life.

1. While there are many rewards for a life following Jesus’ plan for us, we know that even the most dedicated Christ followers experience **pain** in many forms.
 - a. What are some ways that people experience pain?
 - b. Can someone share a personal encounter with any of these types of pain? (give examples: physical, emotional, spiritual)
 - c. What are some ways we can train our mind and body to form a healthy way of handling unavoidable pain or to better prepare for it?
2. When this passage (Psalm 121:1) refers to the mountains, it’s referring to what *seems to be* a more **pleasurable** life, a distraction from a God given journey-but this distraction is a life not following Christ.
 - a. What are some of the “mountains” that have tried to distract you or have taken you a different route than the one you know you were supposed to because it seemed more pleasurable than following Jesus?
(*leaders-* please give personal examples. This takes some vulnerability and honesty.)
3. If we’re being honest, we’ve all desired to feel **powerful**. No matter the influence we may have over our community, Power is good when used to glorify Jesus, power is bad if our desire is to gain followers and influence for selfish desires.
 - a. What are some of the ways you’ve personally seen power used for bad or for good?

- b. What are some ways you can change the way you leverage power, or your influence, for good?
4. We talk each week about how important it is to be in community with people and to serve people around us, but we have to be careful to now allow people to become a distraction to our calling.
 - a. Can someone give a personal example of how people have served as a distraction in their journey with Jesus?
 - b. How can we define boundaries of serving people, but now allowing them to be more of a priority than Jesus?

TAKE AWAY & ACTION ITEMS:

As we aim to train ourselves to fix our gaze and turn away from distractions, we must be honest with each other about:

- Our Fears
- The Danger of Abandonment
- Our Story

RESOURCES used on Sunday:

Psalms 121:1-8 NIV

1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? 2 My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. 3 He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; 4 indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; 6 the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. 7 The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; 8 the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

But to deviate from the truth for the sake of some prospect of hope of our own can never be wise, however slight that deviation may be. It is not our judgment of the situation which can show us what is wise, but only the truth of the Word of God. Here alone lies the promise of God's faithfulness and help. It will always be true that the wisest course for the disciple is always to abide solely by the Word of God in all simplicity.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Uncertainty and fear are relieved by authority. Training is authority. It's a release valve. With enough exposure, you can adapt out those perfectly ordinary, even innate, fears that are bred mostly from unfamiliarity. Fortunately, unfamiliarity is simple to fix, which makes it possible to increase our tolerance for stress and uncertainty.

- Ryan Holiday