

THE ROAD OF Love

DEALING WITH PRESSURE

The odds against bowling a perfect 300 are about 225,000 to one. After bowling a perfect game, one bowler collapsed out of shock from the immense pressure. Another bowler was just one roll away from a perfect game. He just needed one more strike, but the pressure was so great, he couldn't allow himself to face the possibility of missing it. So instead of rolling the ball, he packed his shoes and ball and walked out—never again setting foot in a bowling alley.

Do you handle pressure very well?

Does the pressure of failure ever keep you from doing something, or from finishing something you've started?

Look at the pressure Mary and Joseph had to endure...

Luke 2:1-5 — In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. 2 This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David.

In his message this week, Pastor Chris listed many dangers that Mary and Joseph could have encountered on their way to Bethlehem.

List some of the difficulties they may have faced.

Why do you think God chose Mary and Joseph to raise His Son Jesus?

List some of the things you are dealing with right now in your life.

Can you honestly say that your love for God is greater than the obstacles that you face?

Are you more or less willing to face your obstacles if it means allowing God's will to take shape in your life?

Is it possible to get away from pressure?

Mary and Joseph may have been left by a caravan of other people traveling the same way. Have you ever had people who have left you in the middle of your problems? If so, why do think others will abandon you?

What do you hang on to when you go through difficult times?

EMOTIONS VS. INTELLECT

Pastor Chris described "emotional faith" as being a faith that we can feel. It lifts us up and it makes us feel good and things are just right. Then he compared it to "intellectual knowledge," where we can rationally look at a situation and have an understanding.

Why would an emotional faith only have failed Mary and Joseph?

Why would an intellectual knowledge only have failed Mary and Joseph?

When the situation doesn't "feel" good, when it doesn't seem to make good sense, and you can't figure out what God is up to, where do you turn?

You have to focus on the _____

1 John 4:8-10 — ... God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Isaiah 9:6 — For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Last week we looked at the title “Wonderful Counselor.” This week we look at the two titles of “Mighty God and Eternal Father.” These seem to be two sides of the same coin.

What does Mighty God conjure in your mind?

What does Everlasting Father mean to you?

How do these images refuel your faith?

Can you see a good side to your difficulties?

In Pastor Chris’ sermon, he pointed out the two sides of each of these situations. List what is the negative side and what is the positive side.

Mary —

Joseph —

Census —

The Journey —

The census came a really bad time. I’m sure you’ve experienced days when everything seemed to go wrong and then....one more thing happens on top of that! However, the prophecies had stated that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph were in Nazareth. The call for the census to be taken would have simply been a way to move the couple to the place where they needed to be in order to fulfill what the prophets had spoken regarding the baby.

They were moved in _____ for their _____.

Have you stopped to consider that the problems you are encountering right now in your life may be God moving you in the direction you need to go to fulfill His will in your life?

How does that thought make you feel?

How does remembering how much God loves you help you to see the “flip side” of your situation?

When Mary and Joseph held the baby in their arms, do you think they remembered how difficult the journey was to get there?

At the end of your difficult season, God may have a blessing far greater than you have ever imagined! Just hold on!

James 1:2-4 — Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

PRAYER TIME

- Give God praise for the trials He has brought you through in your past.
- Thank Him for His great love for you, that even before you knew Him He knew and loved you.
- Ask God to help you see the good in every difficult situation.
- Pray that God will show you the assignment that He has in mind for you.
- Pray for the difficult situations that the others in your group may be going through right now.