

It Is Well

Real faith shows up in a changed life, and when our weight slips back onto ourselves, as it will, the foundation hasn't moved.

FROM THE BOOK: CHAPTERS 9 AND 12

BEFORE YOU MEET

- Read Chapter 9 (“Faith That Works”) and Chapter 12 (“How to Believe”) of *The Weight of God*. Chapter 12 includes the author’s own story of a very dark season; read it before you lead.
- **A pastoral note:** some members may be carrying heavy things, so go gently, follow up privately with anyone who seems affected, and know where to point people: Lifeline Australia 13 11 14 (24 hours).
- Read Romans 7:15–8:1 and James 2:14–26. Optional: play the hymn *It Is Well with My Soul* as people arrive.
- Bring Bibles, pens and a printed participant sheet for each person.
- Time plan for 75 minutes: 5 arrive and settle, 10 open, 15 the idea, 10 read together, 25 talk, 5 this week, 5 pray and wrap up the series.

OPEN

10 min

Is there a song, hymn or line that has stuck with you through a season of life, good or hard? Keep it light if you like: the song from your wedding counts.

THE IDEA

15 min

Christians have long puzzled over an apparent contradiction. Paul says we are justified by faith, not by works. James says faith without works is dead.

The tension only bites if “faith” means agreeing with the right ideas. If faith means *pistis*, putting your full weight on God, the two fit together. Paul is saying you don’t earn your place on the foundation by performing well enough; you step onto it. James is saying that if your weight has truly moved, your life will show it, the way a tree in good soil can’t help producing fruit. As the book puts it, they’re standing back to back, facing different problems with the same answer.

But here’s the honest part. Our weight doesn’t stay put.

The author describes a season years ago when, from the outside, everything was going well. He had sold a business he’d built, his first daughter had just arrived, and he had a home and no money worries. Yet the thought crept in that there was nothing left to live for,

and it became so dark that he thought about ending his life. (Chapter 12 tells it in his own words.) He’s clear that the way out wasn’t quick and wasn’t a formula. His weight would land on God for a day, a week, sometimes a month, and then he’d find himself standing on his own competence again.

Paul admits in Romans 7 that he keeps doing the very thing he doesn’t want to do.

Through that season one line kept coming back to him: *It is well with my soul*. Horatio Spafford wrote that hymn in 1873, after losing much of his wealth in the great Chicago fire and then his four daughters in a shipwreck at sea. The author says the line felt untrue at the time, yet it wouldn’t let him go, “Until it became true.” His reflection: “Spafford lost everything and found the Foundation. I had everything and couldn’t find it, because everything was in the way.”

So what do we do when our weight slips? Paul’s answer comes straight after Romans 7: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (NIV)

The New Testament word for repentance, *metanoia*, isn’t mainly about feeling bad. It’s turning: lifting your weight off old foundations and back onto God. And 1 John 1:9 gives the daily pattern. Confessing means telling God the truth: my weight slipped. And he is faithful, the one you can lean on, and receives you back. Not because you confessed thoroughly enough, but because of who he is.

“The foundation has not moved. It does not move.”

READ TOGETHER

10 min

- **Romans 7:15–8:1.** Notice how honest Paul is about his own struggle, and how quickly chapter 8 turns to “therefore”.
- **James 2:14–26.** Notice that James’s examples, Abraham and Rahab, are people whose trust in God showed up in what they actually did.

- 1 Before tonight, had you ever noticed the tension between Paul and James? Does the idea of faith as putting your weight on God help hold them together for you?

LEADER NOTE *Some will find this neat and others will still have questions. That's fine; the aim is a useful lens, not a final verdict.*

- 2 James says real faith shows. Without naming names, what changes have you seen in someone whose weight genuinely moved onto God?

LEADER NOTE *Steer gently away from scorekeeping or judging other people's faith. Look for stories of quiet, real change rather than dramatic ones.*

- 3 Paul admits he keeps doing what he doesn't want to do. Where do you notice your weight slipping back onto yourself, and how do you usually notice?

LEADER NOTE *Normalise this. If the leader admits it first, others will feel free to be honest. Keep the focus on noticing, not on guilt.*

- 4 The author says Spafford lost everything and found the foundation, while he had everything and couldn't find it. Why might good things, even very good things, get in the way?

LEADER NOTE *Someone in the room may be living through real loss right now. Don't present suffering as a lesson or a shortcut; let the hymn story be a comfort rather than a formula.*

- 5 *Metanoia* means lifting your weight off an old foundation. What's one thing you've been resting on that you could stop making load-bearing this week?

LEADER NOTE *Invite, don't press. Offer pairs or silent reflection, and be ready to follow up privately if anything heavy surfaces.*

THIS WEEK

5 min

Lift one weight off an old foundation. Name one thing you've been standing on, such as a career, a plan, a relationship, your reputation or your ability to hold it all together. You don't have to give it up; just stop making it the thing your life rests on. When you notice it sliding back, use the pattern from 1 John 1:9: tell God the truth, my weight slipped, and let him receive you back.

PRAY

5 min

Thank God that he is faithful, the foundation that holds when we don't. Pray for anyone carrying something heavy tonight, by name if that's appropriate, and for those for whom *it is well* doesn't feel true yet. Give thanks for these seven weeks together, and finish by pointing the group to "Keep going" on their sheet.