

# Conversation Starter

For the week of September 28 to October 4, 2008

This week's theme: Powerful Pressure  
Current sermon series: The Journey

When it comes to good times, life's adventures, answered prayer, experiencing miracles and feeling God's presence, it's much easier to give thanks to Him than during times when we are experiencing trials, stress, uncertainty, suffering, pain and negative powerful pressure. During last Sunday's gospel reading, Peter, James and John were up on a mountain with Jesus and saw Jesus transformed where His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as light. In addition to this, they saw Jesus speaking with Moses and Elijah plus they heard God declare: *"This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5b)* Wow, what an experience -- certainly one worthy of giving thanks to God. But it wasn't in God's plan for Jesus, Peter, James and John to remain on the mountain indefinitely. After that amazing, holy and life changing experience, back to the bottom of the mountain they went -- a place that represents people in need and a place that reminds us of people who are suffering, experiencing trials and difficulties and who are under powerful pressure. For example, as soon as they got to the bottom of the mountain, a man approached Jesus, knelt down, and told Him about his son's situation: *Lord, have mercy on my son. He is an epileptic and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. (Matthew 17:14-15)* Being followers of Jesus doesn't make us immune from experiencing suffering, pain, stress, troubles and powerful pressure. God hasn't promised us that tough times will never come, but He has promised to be with us always even when in the midst of powerful pressure.

READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:18

1. Why is it God's will for us to give thanks to Him in **all** circumstances including when life is tough?
2. Describe a time in your life when you were experiencing powerful pressure in the negative sense.
3. How did you react during this difficult time?
4. What Bible verses/passages have been helpful to you in times of suffering, pain and difficulty?

If time permits, continue past this point for further discussion:

READ: John 14:16-18

5. At the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus says: *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20b) How is it possible for Jesus to be with us always?
6. Describe a difficult time when it was tough to have hope and you found your faith in God wavering.
7. Describe a difficult time when you had hope, when you experienced God's peace/presence and/or when your faith in God actually grew.
8. If Christians are not immune from life's challenges, then what benefits are there in being a follower of Jesus?