

SERMON STUDY GUIDE - August 30, 2026

STAY STRONG! ENDURE!

Based on the message by Justin Younger, MOVE Student Ministry Pastor at The Roads Church – Norris City

OVERVIEW

What happens to your faith when following Jesus gets hard?

In - Stay Strong! Endure! - Justin Younger begins with Jesus' parable of the sower in Mark 4 and focuses on the seed that falls on stony ground. Jesus explains that these are people who receive the Word with gladness, but because the Word has no deep root in them, they endure only for a time. When tribulation or persecution comes because of the Word, they stumble.

That warning raises an important question for every follower of Jesus: Is the Word of God taking deep enough root in us that we will remain faithful when resistance comes?

Jesus never promised His followers a life without hardship. In John 15, He tells His disciples that if the world hated and persecuted Him, they should expect opposition as well. Following Jesus means we are moving in a direction that often conflicts with the values of the world and the work of the enemy.

Resistance does not always mean we are doing something wrong. The enemy wants to attack what God is producing within us and keep us from becoming the people God created us to be. Instead of allowing opposition to uproot our faith, Scripture calls us to stand.

Paul tells Timothy to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. The Christian life includes spiritual battle, but we do not fight alone or depend on our own strength. Jesus has already defeated death, hell, and the grave, and the Holy Spirit gives us strength to remain faithful through hardship.

Jesus also tells us to count the cost of following Him. Salvation cannot be earned, but discipleship calls us to carry our cross, surrender ourselves to Jesus, and continue following Him when obedience becomes costly.

The question is not simply whether we can receive God's Word with gladness. Will we allow it to take root deeply enough that we continue believing, obeying, and following Jesus when pressure comes?

"Stay strong. Don't back down. Hold fast to your confession of faith. Believe God."

This study will challenge us to expect resistance, recognize what the enemy is trying to uproot, endure hardship, count the cost of discipleship, and stand our ground by drawing near to God.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

Read → Respond → Reflect

Read each passage carefully before answering the Respond questions. Keep your Bible open and allow the Scriptures themselves to provide the answers.

Then use the Reflect questions to examine your own response to hardship, opposition, disappointment, and spiritual resistance. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you whether God's Word is deeply rooted in you or whether difficult circumstances have begun to weaken your willingness to trust and follow Jesus.

The goal is not simply to know that Christians will face hardship. The invitation is to become a disciple whose faith remains rooted, who draws strength from Jesus, and who continues following Him when resistance comes.

This guide is designed for individual study, family discipleship, and Roads Groups.

SECTION 1 — EXPECT RESISTANCE WHEN YOU FOLLOW JESUS

Focus

In Mark 4, Jesus describes people who receive the Word with gladness but have no deep root. When tribulation or persecution comes because of the Word, they stumble.

Jesus also tells His disciples in John 15 to expect opposition. If the world hated and persecuted Him, His followers should not assume faithful discipleship will always be comfortable.

Resistance does not automatically mean God has abandoned us or that we are doing something wrong. Our faith must become deeper than our circumstances.

Read

Mark 4:14–17; John 15:18–21

Respond

1. According to Mark 4:14, what does the sower sow?
2. How do those on stony ground initially receive the Word?
3. Why do they endure only for a time?
4. According to Mark 4:17, what causes them to stumble?
5. According to John 15:18, whom did the world hate before it hated Jesus' followers?
6. What does Jesus say in John 15:20 about the relationship between a servant and his master?

Reflect

- How do I normally respond when following Jesus becomes difficult or costly?
- Have I ever interpreted hardship as evidence that God was distant from me?

- Is my faith rooted deeply enough in God's Word to remain steady when my circumstances change?
- Where is God asking me to remain faithful even though I am experiencing resistance?

Further Scripture Reading

Mark 4:3–20; John 15:18–25; Matthew 24:9–13

SECTION 2 — UNDERSTAND WHAT THE ENEMY IS AFTER

Focus

Jesus' teaching in Mark 4 shows that the enemy wants to interfere with the Word planted in our hearts.

"The devil's not after you. He's after what's on the inside of you."

The enemy wants to keep God's Word from taking root and bearing fruit in our lives. When opposition comes, we must remember that our battle is not against people.

Instead of reacting in anger or retreating, we recognize the spiritual battle and remain faithful to what God has spoken.

Read

Mark 4:14–17; Ephesians 6:10–13

Respond

1. According to Mark 4:14, what does the seed represent?
2. In Mark 4:17, what happens when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word?
3. According to Ephesians 6:12, who or what is our struggle not against?
4. What kinds of spiritual forces does Ephesians 6:12 say believers wrestle against?
5. How does Ephesians 6:11 describe the reason believers need the whole armor of God?

Reflect

- When I experience opposition, am I more likely to fight people or recognize the spiritual battle taking place?
- What truth from God's Word is the enemy trying to discourage me from believing or living?
- Where have pressure, fear, relationships, or circumstances tempted me to compromise what God has planted in me?
- What would it look like for me to resist the enemy without becoming angry or bitter toward people?

Further Scripture Reading

SECTION 3 — ENDURE HARDSHIP AS A GOOD SOLDIER

Focus

Paul tells Timothy to “endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” Following Jesus includes spiritual battle, but we do not fight alone.

Our strength comes from Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, not from our own ability. Hardship can deepen our endurance and dependence on God.

The question is not simply how quickly we can escape difficulty, but how we can remain faithful to Jesus while walking through it.

Read

2 Timothy 2:3; Ephesians 6:10–13

Respond

1. According to 2 Timothy 2:3, what does Paul tell Timothy to endure?
2. What comparison does Paul use to describe this kind of endurance?
3. According to Ephesians 6:10, where does a believer’s strength come from?
4. What does Ephesians 6:13 tell believers to do when facing the evil day?
5. After doing everything, what does Ephesians 6:13 say believers should still be able to do?

Reflect

- What hardship am I currently tempted to escape rather than endure faithfully?
- When I feel spiritually exhausted, where do I usually look for strength?
- Am I depending primarily on my own ability to overcome, or am I drawing strength from Jesus and the Holy Spirit?
- How might God use the difficulty I am walking through to deepen my endurance and dependence on Him?

Further Scripture Reading

2 Timothy 2:1–4; Ephesians 6:10–18

SECTION 4 — COUNT THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

Focus

Jesus never hid the cost of discipleship. In Luke 14, He calls His followers to bear their cross and tells them to count the cost before beginning.

Salvation is a free gift, but discipleship requires surrender. Following Jesus may affect our comfort, relationships, priorities, plans, and desires.

A faith that lasts must be prepared not only to begin following Jesus, but to keep following when obedience costs something.

Read

Luke 14:27–33

Respond

1. According to Luke 14:27, what must a person bear in order to come after Jesus as His disciple?
2. What does Jesus say a person planning to build a tower should do first?
3. Why should the builder calculate the cost before beginning?
4. What could happen if someone begins building but cannot finish?
5. According to Luke 14:33, what does Jesus say about someone who is unwilling to forsake all?

Reflect

- Have I thought seriously about what following Jesus may cost me?
- Is there an area of my life where I want Jesus without wanting the surrender He asks of me?
- What comfort, relationship, desire, habit, or priority is hardest for me to place under Jesus' lordship?
- Am I building a life of discipleship that is prepared to finish, or am I mainly focused on beginning well?

Further Scripture Reading

Luke 14:25–33

SECTION 5 — STAY STRONG, STAND YOUR GROUND, AND DON'T QUIT

Focus

Resistance does not have to determine the outcome of our faith.

Scripture calls us to resist the devil, draw near to God, and remain faithful. Endurance does not mean pretending the battle is easy. It means refusing to let hardship separate us from Jesus.

“Stay strong. Don’t back down. Hold fast to your confession of faith. Believe God.”

Keep believing. Keep following. Stay strong and endure.

Read

James 4:7–8; Matthew 24:9–13

Respond

1. According to James 4:7, to whom should we submit?
2. What are believers told to do toward the devil?
3. What does James 4:7 say will happen when we resist the devil?
4. According to James 4:8, what happens when we draw near to God?
5. According to Matthew 24:13, what does Jesus say about the person who endures to the end?

Reflect

- Where am I most tempted to quit, back down, or stop believing right now?
- When resistance comes, does it drive me away from God or cause me to draw nearer to Him?
- Who can I walk with instead of allowing the enemy to isolate me in the battle?

Further Scripture Reading

James 4:7–8; Matthew 24:9–13; Mark 4:14–20

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Following Jesus does not mean you will never face resistance.

Jesus told His followers that hardship and persecution would come. The question is whether His Word will take deep enough root in your heart that you remain faithful when it does.

Do not let resistance convince you that God has abandoned you. Do not allow difficulty to uproot what He has planted in you. The battle is real, but you are not fighting alone.

Draw your strength from Jesus. Allow the Holy Spirit to strengthen you. Count the cost of following Christ and determine that you will continue with Him even when obedience becomes difficult.

Resist the devil. Draw near to God. Hold fast to your confession of faith.

“Stay strong. Don’t back down. Hold fast to your confession of faith. Believe God.”

Stay strong. Endure. Keep going. Don’t stop. Don’t quit. Don’t give up.