

Small Group Study

Our Mission

To build a Christian community by making fully devoted disciples of non-religious and nominally religious people



Discussion

Your Kingdom Come: “Kingdom Suffering”

Scripture

Have volunteers read the following scriptures:

2 Corinthians 11:23-27 (NLT):

23 Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. 24 Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. 26 I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. 27 I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.

Romans 8:18-30 (NLT):

18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. 24 We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. 25 But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27 And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. 28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for

Ice Breaker

Use ONE of the questions to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. Share a time when you were physically injured in some way.
2. If we met you as a child (say between the ages of 8 and 11), what kind of person would we meet? Describe yourself at that age. What did you do for fun? What did you want to be when you grew up?
3. What are three things you'd like people to say about you at your funeral?

them. 29 For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.

Questions

Please feel free to adjust this study to fit your group's needs and to listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is not necessary to use all of the questions.

1. After reading the passage from Romans... what do you think these verses say about how Christians can understand the problem of suffering and evil in our world?

2. How can we respond to personal suffering? What help does God give us?

3. During times of hardship what tends to happen with your relationship with Christ? Does it diminish or does it strengthen?

4. Reread Romans 8:28. Share a time when you looked back on your life and realized this principle as being true.

5. God will continually put people in our lives that we do not like. It's in our nature to want to tell them such or to simply avoid them. And yet there is often a reason for them being there, and we should be careful not to miss an important learning and growth opportunity. Is there or has there been someone like this in your own life? What do you think you're supposed to learn from this person?

6. Make sure everyone has a piece of paper and a pen or pencil for the following exercise. Take 5 minutes or so, and each person write a prayer on your paper thanking God for His redemption of your mistakes. Think of specific times when you created a bad situation and yet, He brought good from it. Thank Him for the good He will bring from the trials you are currently facing.

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God bless,

Roger Sodsod

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More (turn to the next page!) —————>

Something to Take Home...

Why God Gives US Problems

1. God uses problems to DIRECT you.
2. God uses problems to INSPECT you.
3. God uses problems to CORRECT you.
4. God uses problems to PROTECT you.
5. God uses problems to PERFECT you.

The problems you face will either defeat you or develop you -- depending on how you respond to them. Unfortunately most people fail to see how God wants to use problems for good in their lives. They react foolishly and resent their problems rather than pausing to consider what benefit they might bring. Here are five ways God wants to use the problems in your life:

1. God uses problems to DIRECT you. Sometimes God must light a fire under you to get you moving. Problems often point us in a new direction and motivate us to change. Is God trying to get your attention? "Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways." Proverbs 20:30
2. God uses problems to INSPECT you. People are like tea bags ... if you want to know what's inside them, just drop them into hot water! Has God ever tested your faith with a problem? What do problems reveal about you? "*When you have many kinds of troubles, you should be full of joy, because you know that these troubles test your faith, and this will give you patience.*" James 1:2-3
3. God uses problems to CORRECT you. Some lessons we learn only through pain and failure. It's likely that as a child your parents told you not to touch a hot stove. But you probably learned by being burned. Sometimes we only learn the value of something ... health, money, a relationship... by losing it. "*It was the best thing that could have happened to me, for it taught me to pay attention to your laws.*" Psalm 119:71-72
4. God uses problems to PROTECT you. A problem can be a blessing in disguise if it prevents you from being harmed by something more serious. Last year a friend was fired for refusing to do something unethical that his boss had asked him to do. His unemployment was a problem, but it saved him from being convicted and sent to prison a year later when management's actions were eventually discovered. "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.*" Genesis 50:20
5. God uses problems to PERFECT you. Problems, when responded to correctly, are character builders. God is far more interested in your character than our comfort. Your relationship to God and your character are the only two things you're going to take with you into eternity. "*We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.*" Romans 5:3-4

Here's the point: God is at work in your life even when you do not recognize it or understand it. But it's much easier and profitable when you cooperate with Him!

--by Mena Haryanto

STEPPING STONES

The Lord came to me like a dream one day and asked, "Why do you sorrow?"
I answered, "Lord, my life is so full of pain, I can't face one more tomorrow."

The Lord sat down beside me, and gently took my hand.
He said, "Let me explain to you and then you'll understand."

Each sorrow is a stepping stone you must surmount each day,
And every stepping stone you climb is a sorrow that's passed away.

The road of life is a mountainside, with crevices in which to be caught,
But as you struggle on your way, I, the Rock, will lend support.

Every stepping stone you climb, makes spirit and heart grow strong.
Exercising character and faith this road seems painful and long.

The way is paved with stepping stones, to uplift your heart and soul,
Though difficult, they aid your way, to a City paved with gold.

I know that you are tired, for I too have walked this way,
My sorrows did they multiply, but I cleared the stones away.

I left my rock to lift you up, I left behind my story.
To give you strength to make your climb, to that special place in glory.

And never fear, the Rock is here, You'll never climb alone
Surmount life's sorrows, continue on, For they are but stepping stones.

~~ author unknown