

When life gets HARD!

Five ways God brings **meaning**

Session 3: When Life Gets Hard, God Brings Greater Appreciation

February 18-24, 2018

Hangout (30 Minutes)

1. If there are new people to your group, have everyone introduce themselves.
2. Think of Thanksgiving for a moment:
 - What is something that you are thankful for in your life right now?
 - What is something “small” that you are thankful for in your life right now?
3. If you can think of an example, share an experience where you wanted something so much that you missed when something else good came your way.

Watch the Video (24 Minutes)

Watch the video if necessary. If everyone viewed the sermon before the meeting, add this time to your discussion.

Discuss (30 Minutes)

It's okay if you don't get to every question. We encourage groups to at least answer numbers 2, 4, 6, and 7.

1. **Explain why you think this statement is true or not true:** When we experience suffering and loss, we can sometimes turn our disappointment towards God and ask, “Why, O Lord?” “How long?” As we wait for God to act and we don't see God stepping in to act, our disappointment can grow to the point where we are so angry with God that we don't see the other gifts God is giving us.
2. Pastor Steve taught that most of the people Jesus was speaking to in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) were low income or poor and they struggled daily to have enough to eat and clean water to drink. **How do you imagine the people listening to Jesus heard this teaching?**

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:25-34

3. Pastor Steve described how Jesus may have used the birds that were flying above and the flowers that everyone could see to lead the people to have greater appreciation for what God had given them.
 - Do you imagine this worked for the people listening to Jesus?
 - What is a “little blessing” (like watching birds or enjoying flowers) that helps you to have greater appreciation for what God has given you?
4. A psychological process that is growing in popularity is called “mindfulness”. One definition is that mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one's attention to more fully appreciate the experiences occurring in the present moment and to do this in a non-judgmental way. **Explain whether or not you think Jesus was leading the people (and us) to be more mindful.**
5. **Explain whether you find this statement to be true or not true, “Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”**
6. **In the sermon, what did you think of the teaching that greater appreciation leads to gratitude which ushers us into God’s supernatural power of recovery?**
7. **What is a next step that you would like to take from this week’s teaching?**

Summary

When life gets hard, we can become angry at God when we are waiting for God to heal and restore our lives. In our anger, we can miss what God is giving us. God brings meaning to our loss and suffering by leading us to more deeply appreciate what God has given us. Being more mindful of what God has given us leads to greater appreciation and gratitude that God has supernatural power of recovery.

Next week we will learn that ***When Life Gets Hard God Brings Deeper Relationships.***

Pray (5 Minutes)

Go around the circle and have each person thank God out loud for at least one blessing. You are encouraged to be specific. If you wish, you can say and complete this sentence as your prayer, “Dear God I thank you for _____”. The leader should begin and end the prayer time.