

When life gets HARD!

Five ways God brings **meaning**

Session 6: When Life Gets Hard, God Brings New Possibilities

March 11 - 17, 2018

Hangout (25 Minutes)

1. If you haven't done so already, leaders inform the group whether you will continue meeting after this study. Discuss if necessary (Leaders: reference the "What's Next" document you received from your coach.) Make plans for a social time together after March 15.
2. Ice Breaker: *Remembering that everyone has the right to pass on any question, choose one of these to answer:* What is one of the best surprises you have pulled off? What one thing do you hope for more than anything else?

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 1, 2, 3, and 5.

1. Share a time when a new possibility came into your life from out of a hard time of loss and suffering. *When someone else is talking, try not to be thinking about what you are going to say, but rather, carefully listen to and empathize with the person.*
2. One sentence that describes what is revealed in the whole Bible is, "God brings new life from death." He cited some examples and then focused on the call of the prophet Isaiah 6:1-13. Have someone read this passage.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." ⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" ⁹ He said, "Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving." ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

¹¹ Then I said, "For how long, Lord?" And he answered: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, ¹² until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. ¹³ And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."

In this passage or Pastor Steve's teaching of it ...

- What do you find helpful in better understanding that *God brings new possibilities when life gets hard*?
 - What remains confusing or troubling for you? As a group, discuss what you find troubling or confusing.
3. Pastor Steve taught that when we experience loss, we grieve for what we had hoped would have been our future (Option A). At the same time, God helps us to see new possibilities that may not have happened without the loss (Option B). In an amazing and paradoxical juxta-position that only God can create, God helps us to see, enjoy, and fully live these new possibilities while at the same time helping us to fully grieve what was lost.
- How have you found this to be true or not true in your life?
 - How does this affect your relationship with the Lord?
4. Have someone read Philippians 4:4-7, 12-13.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ... ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

- Explain how you find any part of this passage to be helpful or encouraging.
 - Share a time when you experienced any part of this passage.
5. At the end of the sermon, Pastor Steve reviewed the sermon series. Share one of the understandings presented during this series that is helpful or encouraging to you.

Summary of Sermon

When life gets hard, God brings new possibilities. Even while we continue to fully grieve the loss or suffering we experience, God helps us to see, enjoy, and fully live these new possibilities. This helps us take steps forward on the path to recovery, build holy resilience, take back joy, and face the future with confident hope.

Pray (10 Minutes)

Remembering that anyone can pass, go around the circle. Share one specific hope that you have for the next 1-2 years. Listen carefully to the request of the person to your right, taking notes if it will help you remember. After everyone has shared, go around the circle again to pray for those requests by having the person to everyone's left briefly pray for that person's hope. This could be a simple, one-sentence prayer like: "Dear Lord, we pray for (name of person). Please meet his/her hope for (name the hope)." The leader begins and ends the prayer.