

Running Through The Dark Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To discuss and apply one of the three truths about God to the reality of suffering to our everyday lives.

Sermon Refresher: Over the course of world history, each culture has either prepared or unprepared their members to deal with the reality of pain and suffering. Keith noted that our Western culture has failed miserably at helping us know how to process and walk through the pain we face. Because of this, we need to be even more attentive to what the Scriptures have to say about how God relates to us and is involved in our suffering. In order to walk well with God through our trials, we must remember and embrace that God is in control, he has a purpose for our suffering and that he is with us in it.

Icebreakers: What do you miss most about pre-Covid life?

Discussion:

1. When we are confronted with pain and suffering in our lives, oftentimes we try to avoid and numb ourselves to it. List off some specific ways that we see this in our culture and in ourselves.
2. During this season, what have been some of the new ways you've experienced disappointment, discouragement and suffering that you weren't experiencing prior to emergence of Covid-19? What emotions has that stirred up within you?

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3. In his book, *Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering*, Tim Keller writes: "Sociologists and anthropologists have analysed and compared the various ways that cultures train its members for grief, pain, and loss. And when the comparison is done, it is often noted that our own contemporary secular, Western culture is one of the weakest and worst in history at doing so."

Why do you think our Western culture has failed so badly at preparing its members to handle grief, pain and loss?

4. One truth that will help us walk with God through dark times is the reality that God is in control of our suffering. Is it challenging for you to embrace that truth or does it bring comfort? Explain your reasoning in either case.
5. We all crave to understand the "why" in our suffering and God's purpose for it. Scriptures tell us that God does have a purpose in our suffering. Sometimes we're able to look back and see purpose in our suffering; Other times, we can't see it at all. Share with the group about a time when you were able to see what God was doing in and through your pain or share about a situation where you still might be struggling to see God's purpose in it.
6. Read Isaiah 53:1-6 out loud together as a group.

Isaiah 53:1-6

[1] Who has believed what he has heard from us?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

[2] For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;

he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.

[3] He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

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[4] Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.

[5] But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.

[6] All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all. (ESV)

As you read through this passage, what stands out to you regarding the suffering of Jesus?

How does the reality that Jesus suffered many things in his life help and comfort you as you experience suffering in your life?

In what ways might it be challenging for you to remember and connect with the reality that Jesus is with you and can empathize with your pain and suffering?

Sharing and Prayer:

Which of these three truths that we discussed today do you need to remind yourself of on a daily basis and why?

- God is in control of our suffering.
- God has a purpose in our suffering.
- God is with us in our suffering.

Spend time praying for each person in the group that they would be able to cling to the truth they identified as the one they are most in need of right now.