

THE GLORY OF GOD

WEEKS 1-4

THE GLORY OF GOD



WEEK ONE

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

THE GLORY OF GOD

WEEK ONE

WHEN GOD WAITS

BIG IDEA

The Japanese are well-known for their pottery. Over the centuries, they have refined the craft of making beautiful, unique pottery that is also very durable. Early pottery was created from clay. The clay was broken up into smaller pieces, mixed with a small amount of water, and then beaten with a mallet until it was of the desired texture. The potter would then knead the clay continuously and allow the clay to sit for up to a week, after which it would go through an intense process to remove all air bubbles. Only then could the clay be kneaded and shaped into an object of beauty.

Many potters chose to shape their objects by hand. Rather than creating a flawless vessel, they desired to create unique, original objects. They would often leave their handprint or fingerprints on the objects as a way to identify the creation as their own. Even marks made by their tools were often left in order to create the asymmetry that many valued.

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Once the item was shaped, they would surround the object with fire and allow it to bake. Objects made at lower temperatures ended up being brittle and easily shattered, so they would bake them at high temperatures to ensure durability. Due to the high heat, stains from the ash would often be left on the item, each having its own unique coloring, depending on the fire or kiln used. When pottery was broken, rather than throw it out, the potter would fill the cracks with gold, increasing the uniqueness and value of the object.

NOTES

In this week's study, we will see that we are also like pottery, made of clay by the hands of the Master Potter. Through His molding and shaping process, He is able to take simple, earthly clay and create something beautiful and unique, bearing the mark of His image!

Passages we'll review:

1 Peter 1:3-7; Job 23:8-14

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OPENING

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

NOTES

Think of a time when you felt hopeless. How did you cope? Where do people turn to find help in crisis?

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What jumped out at you from the video in this session? What are some of the key points that affected you more than others?

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READ

Read 1 Peter 1:3-5

Our study opens with a doxology, or a hymn or expression of praise to God. While those to whom Peter was writing were in the middle of very difficult circumstances, the first thing we find is a passage that praises and worships God! Peter knew first-hand that being a follower of Christ was not for the faint of heart. He had been with Jesus during His ministry and had seen the opposition Jesus faced from the Jewish leaders. He had walked through His crucifixion, even denying Jesus himself. And he had experienced the Resurrected Savior and Lord who had called him to help change the world. In doing so, Peter had also faced much opposition himself. It is because of this that Peter could write with such hope!

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Why is it so important that we make praise and thanksgiving a reflex response, despite the situations we encounter?

(We will face many different challenges and distractions in life. If we don't make praise and thanksgiving a reflex response, we will often turn to complaining, judging, anxiety, and self-focus instead of being focused on Him!)

What characteristics of God does Peter describe in this doxology?

(Peter talks about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, reminding us of His deity. We see His great mercy as He provided a Redeemer for us. We see hope as He promises eternal life. His power and strength cannot be overcome.)

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How does our hope as followers of Christ differ from the hope of those who don't believe?

(Many view hope as something they wish to happen or want to come true, with no guarantees. In Christ, our hope is the certainty that God will do what He says He will do, regardless of what we may think, feel, or see around us.)

Why does Peter refer to this hope as “living hope?”

(Our hope is based on what God has shown us in the past, specifically through Christ and His Resurrection. Our hope finds its strength in the living Word of God! This hope has life in it, and it gives life to those who will receive Him!)

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What is unique about the inheritance Peter writes about? How is it different from the inheritance we are left by a family member?

(The inheritance Peter writes about will not perish. It cannot be used up. It will not deteriorate or lose value over time. It cannot be taxed or taken from us. Unlike most things in life, this inheritance will not disappoint us.)

Sometimes, those who inherit much can become “lazy” and unappreciative. Can this happen with our heavenly inheritance as well? Explain.

(Open for discussion)

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Earthly inheritance is not always received all at once. Often, it is received in a trust, over a period of time or at a certain point. This is true of our heavenly inheritance, as well! By following Christ, we have traded the fading glory of man for the eternal, forever glory of God! We no longer rely on our own strength to live as He desires, but we live by His strength! He now guides us and protects us through our lives as He molds us into the person He desires us to be.

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7

Hopelessness can stem from not knowing the truth. What are some false hopes that can leave people in a state of despair or hopelessness?

(Open for discussion)



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Why does Peter say that our trials are only for a “short time?” How does the promise of our inheritance affect our outlook when we face trials?

(When we remember that we have an eternal future with Him, everything we experience here on earth is short in comparison. Our trials may not be short in the earthly sense, but in light of the future hope we have in Christ, we can look forward to what lies ahead.)

How do trials benefit us? Why is it risky to try and avoid trials and difficulties?

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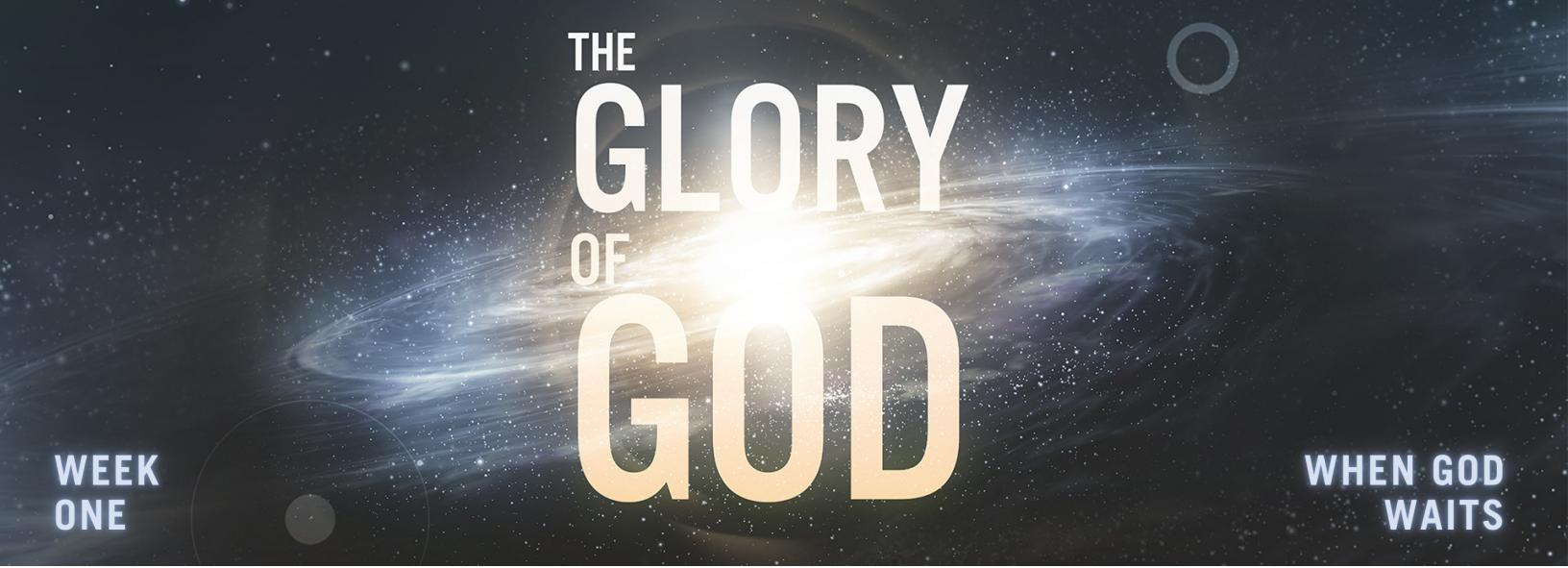
(Trials can be discipline as a result of our choices, helping us to learn His ways. They can also help us to grow spiritually, strengthening our faith and our commitment to Him. They will vary based on where we are in our spiritual growth and what we need to learn. Trials will deepen our relationship with Him, learning new facets of His character, as we depend on Him. Trials can also strengthen our testimony for Him. By avoiding trials, we will miss opportunities to grow and know Him more.)

NOTES

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Job 23:8-14

In this passage, we find Job in the midst of all of his trials. While we know from the beginning of the book of Job that God saw Job as righteous, he had been accused of sin by his so-called friends. He had lost everything. And yet, in his despair, the only one Job called out to was God!



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In this passage, what problem did Job have?
How did deal he with this?

(Job didn't "feel" like God was present, but he knew from experience that God knew exactly where he was and what he was going through. Even though Job couldn't seem to find God, He was with Job always!)

Have you ever felt distant from God? How did you work through that?

(Open for Discussion)

In verse 10, we see Job's reference to gold. Gold is refined and purified under the extreme heat of a furnace or fire, allowing the impurities to rise to the surface and be skimmed off, leaving behind only the pure, bright gold. The gold is completely refined when the goldsmith can see his own image reflected in it.

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How did Job feel about being tested?

(Job knew that there was a divine purpose in what he was going through. He knew that these trials would make him stronger and more like the person God desired him to be.)

What can we gain from this?

(We must remember that God is sovereign, and that He knows what is best for us! While we may face trials and difficulties, they are only intended to make us into who He desires us to be. He knows exactly how hot the fire is, and how long we need to be in it, and He will not leave us! While we may not like it, we can know that through these trials, we will be made stronger, just like the pottery! Through these times, we will bear the markings, or prints, of our Master as He refines and repairs us, and we reflect His image.)

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How have you seen your faith tested and Christ glorified through trials in your life?

(Open for discussion)

Satan uses trials to try and bring out the worst in us, but God uses them to bring out the best. The fire we face can either burn us or purify us. In these times, we must remember to follow Him, despite what we see or understand. Like Job, we can choose to rejoice IN our circumstances, even when we can't rejoice OVER them!

NOTES

PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- Everything we experience now prepares us for the future. Our trials are tools He uses to shape us and teach us. What do you need to do in order to strengthen your relationship with God so that when you face trials, you can stand firm in your faith?

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- Do you need to change your perspective on a trial you are currently experiencing? How would your life be different if you began each day believing in Christ as your Living Hope and relied on Him alone as you face trials and adversity?
 - Our trials are never without a purpose! God uses them for our good and His glory! What scriptures about hope give you confidence? Who can you share your own testimony of hope with this week?

“The Christian’s hope is sound because it is founded upon the character of God and the redeeming work of His Son Jesus Christ. For this reason, Peter could call it “a living hope.” It is living because it rests on reality and not on fancy. It is not wishful dreaming but vital expectation with the whole might of the Most High behind it.” (A.W. Tozer)

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WEEK TWO

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

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THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

BIG IDEA

Our study this week opens with the story of Elijah, a prophet during the reign of King Ahab. His name means “the LORD is my God,” and he definitely lived up to his name! He was sent by God to preach against the worship of the idol Baal among the Jewish people. God worked many miracles through him in order to show His glory and to draw people to Him. Elijah was very passionate about God and doing His work. Throughout his ministry, we see his great faith in God demonstrated as he stood in the gap between God and His people.

NOTES

In 1 Kings 17, God instructed Elijah to go and stay with a widow and her son. Due to a severe drought, the widow was on her last portion of food and had nothing else left, but Elijah obeyed God and asked her for bread. Through faith, God miraculously provided enough food for the widow, her son, and Elijah through the drought, sustaining their life. However, in this week's study, we will see the widow's faith tested greatly as God shows that He is also the Giver of life!

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THE RESURRECTION
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Passages we'll review:

1 Kings 17:17-24, Job 19:25-27;
2 Corinthians 4:16-18

NOTES

OPENING

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

Did you ever have a major wipeout as a kid? Give the details. What did people say or do to try to comfort you? Did it help?

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THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

READ

Read 1 Kings 17:17-24

NOTES

Even though the widow had seen God's provision for her family during the time of famine, in this dire situation she questioned God's goodness, as well as her own guilt for past sins. When we face adversity in life, is it always right to say it is a "judgment from God?"

(Open for discussion)

Have you ever found yourself questioning God's decisions or His goodness during a time of suffering? How did you work through the situation?

(Open for discussion)

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NOTES

When we think back to our study on Blindspots in John 9, what did we learn was often the reason for suffering?

(In John 9, we saw Jesus' healing of the blind man. We learned that many times, suffering was not brought about because of sin, but in order to bring glory to God and draw others to Him.)

How does Elijah refer to the Lord? What does this tell us about his relationship with God? What can we learn about the reality that comes from having a relationship with the Living God?

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(Elijah called Him My Lord God. While Elijah was upset over the death of the son and even questioned God, he knew that God was a good and loving God. He knew that he could go to God with his frustration. He also knew that only God could give life and take it away. As a result of his personal relationship with God, Elijah was able to intercede for the woman on the death of her son. When we have a relationship with the Living God, we can go to Him with our struggles and frustrations, knowing that He loves and cares for us. He will guide us and comfort us.)

It wasn't enough for the widow to see that God could provide. She needed to experience Him personally and encounter His loving-kindness to truly be able to understand and worship Him.

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Why do you think God chose a widow to showcase His power of provision and resurrection?

(God chose a widow who was also a Gentile, not one of the Israelites. She didn't have money, power, or prestige. She would have been overlooked by many. This reminds us that God's grace and mercy is extended to ALL who choose to believe in Him!)

NOTES

The resurrection of her son changed everything for the widow. How does the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's Son, change everything for us?

(This miracle displayed the glory and greatness of God and led the widow to publicly proclaim her faith in Him. Christ's resurrection does the same for us! It gives us hope to continue through the difficult times and gives us the opportunity to reveal His glory and greatness to others. It also gives us eternal hope for a future with Him!)

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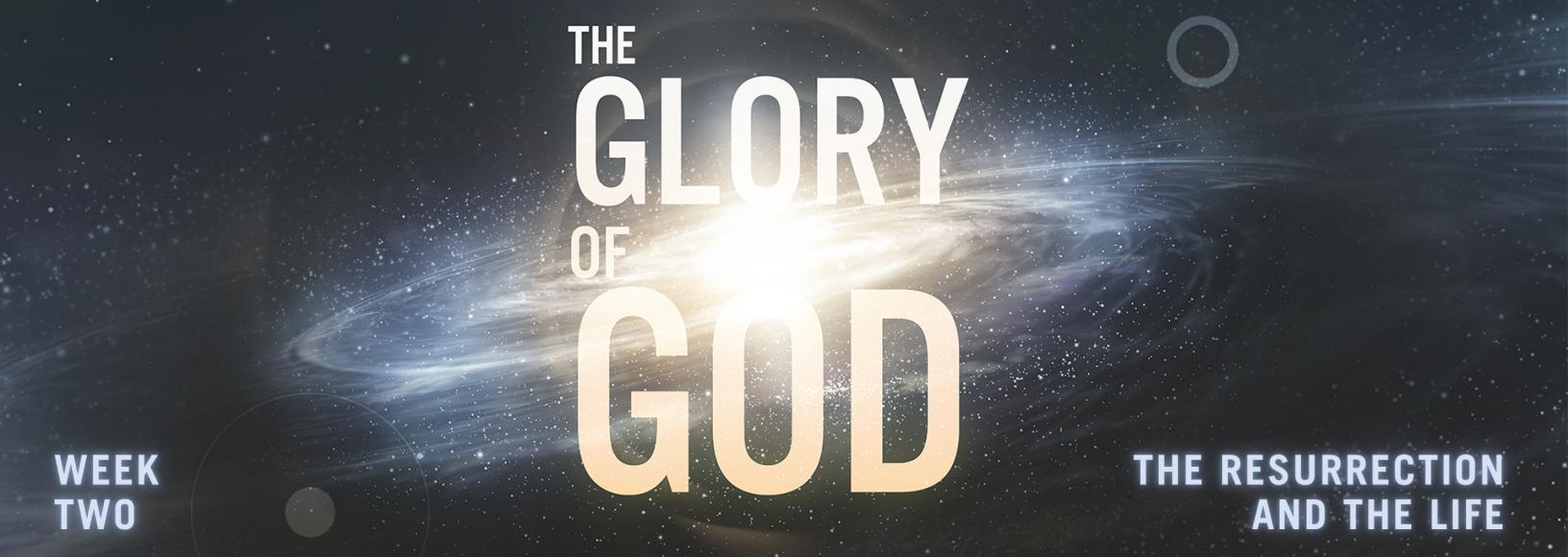
NOTES

Through this miracle and the prophet Elijah, we see that God uses the hard times in life as a training ground, to prepare us for what lies ahead. Like Elijah, our spiritual courage grows as we learn to trust Him!

Read Job 19:25-27

Once again, we look to Job, one considered righteous and blameless in God's sight. He had lost everything, but despite his complaints and frustration, who did Job cling to for his hope?

(Job knew that regardless of what happened here on earth, God would one day redeem the earth. Job knew that he had an eternal future with Him! Job's desire was to see God for himself, in all of His glory! He wanted to worship God in His presence.)



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NOTES

When you are struggling, in crisis, or suffering, where do you go for hope and relief?

(Open for discussion)

How can Job's response challenge and encourage us?

(Job saw God as his Redeemer. This is much like the kinsman-redeemer we read about in the book of Ruth. The kinsman-redeemer could avenge death, redeem property, or free someone from slavery or bondage. This is what Christ offers to us as our Kinsman-Redeemer! Job displayed extreme faith in this passage, as there had not yet been much revealed about the coming Messiah. In light of what Job had endured in losing everything, his faith was even greater still! Now that we have a personal relationship with our Redeemer, we should be even more ready to turn to Him in our times of need for hope and relief!)

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THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

DIGGING DEEPER

NOTES

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Why did Paul not give up, even though he faced much suffering and persecution? How did he find confidence in his suffering?

(Paul was confident, even in his suffering, because he knew he had nothing to fear in life or death because of Christ Jesus. His persecution reminded him that the task put before him was only able to be accomplished through God's strength, not his own. And since he was not overcome by his suffering, he was also reminded that God was the source of his strength! Paul knew that his weakness allowed God's power to shine through!)



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How did Paul contrast his affliction and the glory to come? Why is this important?

(Paul kept the eternal in mind. He saw the affliction as “light” while the glory to come was the “weight of glory.” His current affliction was “momentary”, while the glory to come was “eternal”. While his current struggles were likely not light and momentary in our limited view, Paul knew that his current difficulties were small in comparison to his eternal salvation! His physical suffering brought honor to Christ and drew others to Him as he served Him in obedience.)

In what ways can you experience God’s power in your life through trials and weaknesses?

(Open for discussion)

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THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

What should our attitude be as we do His work and share the Gospel message with others?

NOTES

(We must remember that the Gospel will triumph even though we who deliver its message may suffer for a time! Suffering can be used to strengthen us and make us more like Him when we seek Him and follow His leading. We must keep our faith and focus on Him in order to not grow bitter.)

Like Paul, we must look past our current situation and remember to place our hope in our future with Him. As we go through the hard times, we can lean on our faith in Him. Hebrews 11:1 reminds us: “Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.”

“In some way or other we will have to learn the difference between trusting in the gift and trusting in the Giver. The gift may be good for a while, but the Giver is the Eternal love.”

(F.B. Meyer)

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THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- Elijah asked something of God that had not been done before. Yet he stepped out in faith, and asked God anyway. Do you find yourself facing something that seems impossible? Present it to God today. Make a point to put it before Him each day to see how He can use this situation for His glory.
 - Because of Elijah's faith in and commitment to God, the widow professed that she knew God's Word was indeed the truth. How will you live and act this week so that others will know that you are a man or woman of God and that His Word is truth?
 - We see the power of intercessory prayer in this passage. Elijah acted as an intercessor for the widow who was struggling and lacking faith. How does this speak to you? Who can you intercede for this week?

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WEEK THREE

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READ

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DISCUSS

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THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

BIG IDEA

NOTES

In 1866, Thomas Chisholm was born in a log cabin near Franklin, Kentucky. He didn't have a formal education. He became a teacher and later a newspaper editor. At 27, he became a follower of Christ. He later became a pastor, but due to his poor health, he had to leave the ministry and eventually sold insurance. His life wasn't filled with excitement or tragedy, but he loved to write poetry. In fact, he wrote over 1200 poems during his lifetime. In 1923, his friend, William Runyan, from Moody Bible Institute, was deeply moved by one of his poems and put it to music.

The poem was titled, "Great is Thy Faithfulness." When asked later about what led him to write the hymn, he responded, "There is no circumstantial background for 'Great is Thy Faithfulness,'" adding that the poem was simply an overflow of his "morning by morning realization of God's personal faithfulness."

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Later in life, he wrote: "My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me until now. Although I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness."

This week, we will take a look at the passage that inspired this hymn, a lament from its author, the prophet Jeremiah. Unlike Thomas Chisholm, Jeremiah had experienced great pain, suffering, and sorrow. Through his lamentations to God, we will see how Jeremiah found hope in the middle of seemingly overwhelming odds.

NOTES

Passages we'll review:

Lamentations 3:1-6; Lamentations 3:21-26;
James 1:2-4

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OPENING

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

NOTES

Agree or Disagree: Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you respond to what happens to you. Explain your choice.

WATCH

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What jumped out at you from the video in this session? What are some of the key points that impacted you more than others?

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READ

Read Lamentations 3:1-6

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a lament is a passionate expression of grief or sorrow. For 40 years, Jeremiah had been preaching God's truth to the people of Israel, but they refused to listen. They were experiencing the wrath of God because of their choices. As a result, Jeremiah was deeply troubled. He had suffered great pain and it had taken its toll on him, leaving him looking old and worn-down.

NOTES

When we face God's judgment, it can often lead to feelings of bitterness and hopelessness. Have you ever felt this way? What things do you see in our world today that should cause lamenting? How have these things affected you?

(Open for discussion)

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NOTES

Jeremiah's words sound so hopeless. Yet we know that Jeremiah knew God and all that He could do. He didn't fully understand why he was having to suffer in this way. As he wrote Lamentations, Jeremiah felt like God had abandoned him and left him to die. He had even been ridiculed by those he had been called to warn, which led to his lamentations to God. Lamenting is not just grumbling or complaining. A lament is simply a prayer in pain that leads to trust.

What is the solution to hopelessness?

(Hopelessness comes when we try to see God through our circumstances. The solution to hopelessness is our hope and faith in God! While we will all face grief in our lifetime, when we lose hope, we find ourselves in a state of despair. Faith takes over when we can see our circumstances through the lens and reality of God!)

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Read Lamentations 3:19-26

NOTES

Jeremiah had to be sure to balance his feelings and his faith. It can be so easy to allow our feelings to take over in times of struggle. Often, our feelings get in the way of the Word of God. Which is the truth - our feelings or God's Word? When our feelings contradict God's Word, what should we do?

(Regardless of what we may think or feel at the time, God's Word is always the truth! Our feelings can often get in the way of God's work. When we find ourselves in times of grief, suffering, and pain, we must follow Jeremiah's example and remember God's faithfulness. Even when it seems God is silent, we can still trust in Him. We aren't guaranteed the avoidance of hardships and difficulties. We live in a broken world. We will see much despair, loss, grief, sickness, and pain. But the key is how we respond to them and who we go to as we deal with our lament.)

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How can our prayers and lamentations be an expression of our faith in God? How can it be a form of worship?

(God is a loving Father. He will discipline us, but He won't destroy us. Our faith is revealed and strengthened when we take our grief to the Lord and allow Him to give us hope in spite of it! In going to Him with our struggles, we are able to direct our focus to Him and who He is (worship) instead of our circumstances.)

How did Jeremiah change his focus from grief and despair? Is this a natural response? What is the secret to it?

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(*Jeremiah used his situation to reflect on the past and refocus on the present. This is not our natural response. It is easy to get caught up in the frustrations of the “now.” The secret is hope! This hope was the result of his realization of God’s great mercy, compassion, and faithfulness. He remembered that God had never failed him in the past. He had always come through for him, and He wouldn’t stop now!*)

We can have hope because of who God is - His character! What specific truths about God did Jeremiah remember? Which of these give you hope in hard times?

(Jeremiah remembered God's faithful love, His mercies, His faithfulness, His provision, His goodness, and His deliverance. Allow for discussion.)

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How can reminding ourselves of what we know is true about God fuel hope in our lives, even if our immediate circumstances don't change? What time in your past can you recall God's faithfulness fueling your own faithfulness in Him?

(Remembering is the key! We know that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Though our circumstances will change, He never changes! We can keep track of how God has been faithful to give strength in hard times in the past, and trust that He will continue to do so. Allow for discussion.)

NOTES

In verse 24, Jeremiah says, “The Lord is my portion.” What does he mean by this?

(He tells us God is our portion, which is our inheritance. This means that our strength comes from Him and cannot be used up or destroyed. He is our source of hope, the One we can depend on at all times.)

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What does Jeremiah mean when he says, “God is good to those who wait for Him?” Why is waiting so hard?

(*Jeremiah reminds us that God works in His will and His timing. We may not understand what He is doing, but we know that the Father knows best! It is in our best interest to trust Him and wait on His timing. Waiting can be difficult because we feel the need to be “doing” something or finding a solution. While we wait on Him, we aren’t to sit and do nothing; we can use the waiting as an opportunity to see Him and to know Him more.*)

NOTES

DIGGING DEEPER

Read James 1:2-4

Do you think people expect God to make them “happy?” Is this a wrong idea? What does this passage say about it?

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(God never promises us an easy, always happy life. In fact, when talking about trials, James says WHEN, not IF! This doesn't mean we are to go looking for trials, or even pretend that they are pleasant, but we are to be prepared for them when they come.)

When we are in the middle of a trial, are we supposed to deny our sorrow, grief, or frustrations? What must we choose to believe if we are going to consider our trials occasions for joy?

(We don't ignore the feelings we have in the midst of our trials, but like Jeremiah, we should look at them as an opportunity for joy because of what can come from these trials as God uses them to refine us and prepare us for His use. Trials can produce good in us and will teach us more about who He is.)

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NOTES

It seems that God often uses suffering to help us mature and persevere. Why do you think trials refine us so well? How does our relationship with God change as we go through trials and difficulties?

(Trials are meant to work for us, not against us. They can increase and mature our faith in God as we learn to persevere. Much like physical training, we can't grow our faith without trials. Our perseverance is made stronger as we increase our stamina by being consistent under pressure. Unless we use our faith on a regular basis and push the limits of it, we cannot become all He desires us to be. As we face our trials, we must respond to them with the hope we have in Him! This draws us closer to Him and keeps us dependent on Him as our source of strength!)

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NOTES

Why is it important that our faith is tested?

What is the end goal?

(The trials we face can test our faith to see if it is genuine. They can also be used to remove the qualities within us that are not of Him, much like with gold, as we looked at last week. When we face trials that test our faith, we can be made complete in Christ as we look to Him for all we need. Trials can also help us to remember to look at our circumstances in light of what God is doing in us. The trials we experience can help us to see the bigger picture and to live our lives in a way that brings glory to God!)

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How have the trials you have experienced brought you closer to or pushed you further away from God? How have they affected your faith?

(Open for discussion)

In all things, we must remember that God builds our character *before* He gives us our assignment! When we look to the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Paul, and many others, we find that He first works IN us so that He can then work THROUGH us!

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PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- What challenges do you personally face when it comes to expressing your laments to God? Is anything holding you back?
 - What can you do on a daily basis to keep hope as your focus during life's difficult times? Remember to take time each day to thank God for His faithfulness and mercy in your life!
 - How can you use Lamentations 3 to give hope to someone experiencing a difficult situation? Who can you give hope and encouragement to this week (note, text, e-mail, phone call, etc)?

NOTES

"So strong, so beautiful is hope that it is scarcely possible to overpraise it. It is the divine alchemy that transmutes the base metal of adversity into Gold. In the midst of death Paul could be bold and buoyant because he had firm confidence in the final outcome."

A.W. Tozer

THE GLORY OF GOD



WEEK FOUR

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

THE GLORY OF GOD

WEEK FOUR

JESUS RAISES LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD!

BIG IDEA

70 years ago, on May 29, 1953, Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay ascended to the peak of Mt. Everest. Others had tried and failed, but through the lessons learned by others and by using their own experiences, the pair finally succeeded. Hillary was an unlikely hero. Born in Auckland, New Zealand, he was a beekeeper by trade. He had developed a love for "tramping," or long-distance hiking, when he was 16, and often told others that his goal in life was to see the world.

Hillary never anticipated the fame and fortune that would come with conquering Mt. Everest. When asked later about his experiences at the peak, Hillary replied, "It's not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves." As he continued his explorations of other Himalayan Peaks with the Sherpas, he saw the need to help the people of that region.

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His philanthropic efforts helped improve the lives of the Sherpa people by providing them with schools, hospitals, bridges, water pipelines and more. Through his journey to the summit, Hillary understood that there was so much more to the view if only he could push through the doubts and difficulties and move out of his comfort zone. Christ desires the same from us! This week, we will go with Paul to the mountaintop view, and see the valley below from His viewpoint!

NOTES

Passages we'll review:

Ephesians 1:18-22; Isaiah 40:10-11, 25-31

OPENING

What stood out to you from the message this week? What led you to really think? Did anything challenge you?

What is your favorite comfort object? Why does it bring you so much comfort?

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JESUS RAISES LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD!

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

What jumped out at you from the video in this session? What are some of the key points that impacted you more than others?

NOTES

READ

Read Ephesians 1:18-19

The Christians in Ephesus during Paul's time found themselves in a world much like ours today. Ephesus was a great city, the second most populated in the Roman world, and the center of trade for its region as a great port city. It was known for its marble streets, grand amphitheater, huge library, and prosperous artisan trades; a place where religion and politics merged together. As a result, the Ephesian Christians faced many distractions and false teachings.

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What did Paul pray for the Ephesian Christians in his prayer? Why did he pray for these things?

(Paul prayed that the “eyes” of their hearts would be enlightened, asking that they would have spiritual insight to know Him better and understand fully all that they had in Christ. He prayed that they would know the hope of His calling, which is the certainty and assurance of our future with Him that works in us to help us become like Christ. He prayed that they would know the glorious riches of His inheritance, in order that they would remember that Christ was the greatest treasure of all, and that they had worth and value because of Him. He also prayed that they would know and understand the incomparably great power of God, in order that their faith in Him could be increased.)

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If we have what Paul prays for, how would it change the way we live our lives? How would it change our values? How would we see the world differently? How would we respond to trials?

(If we have these things in us, we can better understand and appreciate that which God has called us to do. The way we live our lives now would be based, not on our own efforts or abilities, but on all we can be in Him. We wouldn't place value on the things of this world, but on the things on which God places value. We can't handle His vast wealth on our own, but we have His wisdom and guidance to lead us. The enemy wants to rob us of all that we have been given, but we have His strength to fight the battles before us. While we may feel overwhelmed, we can be reminded that nothing is too difficult for God!)

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JESUS RAISES LAZARUS
FROM THE DEAD!

NOTES

Read Ephesians 1:20-22

How was God's power exhibited in Christ? Why do we need to be reminded of this?

(God's power was displayed for us through the resurrection of Christ from the dead and His ascension to heaven, where He is Lord over all. We need this reminder so that when we feel overwhelmed by trials and struggles, we can know that no matter what we may encounter here on earth, Christ has defeated death and won the final victory, and that nothing can separate us from Him!)

THE GLORY OF GOD

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JESUS RAISES LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD!

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What does Christ have power over? What does that mean for us?

(As Lord over all, Christ has power over all things, above every other power. This can give us hope when we find ourselves in difficult times. We can look to Him for our hope and strength, remembering that the same power that raised Him from the dead is the power that we can rely on in our lives today (Ephesians 3:20)! He can give us hope for every challenge that we face.)

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JESUS RAISES LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD!

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Isaiah 40:10-11 and 40:25-31

NOTES

The first 39 chapters of Isaiah reveal God's judgment of His people. They had a long, difficult journey ahead of them, but chapter 40 begins the passage of hope that God offered to them. What hope are we given in verses 10 and 11?

(We were reminded that God is not just a God of judgment, but a God who gives comfort. He has the power to deal with our difficult times. We are reminded that He is the Good Shepherd who cares about us. Everything we need, He will supply. He guides and directs us. He will walk with us through the dark valleys, protecting us and carrying us when needed. He will comfort our hurts and pain. He will never leave us.)

THE GLORY OF GOD

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NOTES

When are you likely to forget that God is the Creator and ruler of all things? How can you remind yourself that God is Creator and ruler of all?

(Open for discussion)

God uses the starry night sky as an example to remind us of His power. How can this encourage us?

(If God knows each of the stars in the sky by name, and how many there are, how much more does He know about each of us? He knows all of our hurts, struggles, burdens, and dreams. He knows what we are going through in life. Nothing takes Him by surprise. Nothing is too big for Him to overcome (v.26), and nothing is too small for Him to take notice of (v.27)!)

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NOTES

How does God strengthen those who have faith in Him?

(Nothing is equal to, or greater than, our God! As a result, nothing else can renew our strength. He is the source of our strength. When we put our faith in Him, we grow in Him, and He replaces our weakness and frailty with His strength. We will have what we need to endure the challenges of life. We can go through the hard times with hope because of Him.)

What most encourages you to trust in the Lord from these verses? Why?

(Open for discussion)

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PRAY

Consider the following as you pray together:

- It is not enough for us to simply hear the word of God. We need to understand who He is and what He has done for us in Christ. What is one area of your life that you want to grow in trusting God and His power? Pray that God will deepen your understanding of Him as you seek to know Him more.
 - Our mission in life is to declare God's holiness and glory to the world around us. What is your testimony? How have you seen His glory at work around you? Do you bring glory to Him in everything you do?
 - In a world that is without hope, how can we share the hope that we have with others? Look for opportunities this week to share that hope with those who are hopeless.

NOTES

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