

Life Group Lesson

Essentials • Week of August 28

Introduction

Where do you turn for comfort, for answers in this post-pandemic grid we find ourselves? Thoughts regarding life, work, and family relationships have been fine-tuned. Many people continue to deal with grief over the loss of a loved one. Extreme loneliness and isolation has caused many to suffer silently. Interruption of work and school routine is still affecting us, resulting in a lack of focus, motivation, meaning and purpose, at some level. Anxiety and depression is a daily battle for many of us. Are you weighed down with troubles? Where do you find respite?

This week we are looking at our fifth essential core value represented by the “S” in the acronym of C-H-R-I-S-T. “Small Groups are the best place for life change.” Regular worship attendance is crucial because God’s Word tells us to “Enter His gates with thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise” (Psalm 100:4a). If you are a regular weekend worshiper, Yay God! Yet, according to Acts, chapter two, worship involves more than one hour per week, showing up for church. It is a consistent 24/7 way-of-living and doing life together daily; according to the book of Acts, worship is also meeting in homes and sharing everything we have with one another –

“And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved” (Acts 2:44-47).

Last week (our fourth core value) we learned that worship is Incarnational and Inspirational – Jesus Christ ‘pitched His tent among us’ – and because God became human like us, Christ alone is able to restore our fellowship with the Father. Christ alone deserves honor and praise. Like our heroes of faith across the pages of Scripture, choosing to honor the Lord in good times and times of suffering and unexplained difficulty, like Job, will draw God near. We serve a personal God who loves and cares for us. For “the LORD is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed” (Psalm 34:18). At the end of the book of Job, after losing everything – his wealth, children, health, status – Job made this profound declaration: “I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you

with my own eyes” (Job 42:5). Even though Job’s three friends misunderstood Job’s suffering, Job was able to express his pain with them.

Background

In the New Testament, in Paul’s second letter to the early church in Corinth, he says that “God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3). He comforts us in times of trouble, so we can share with others the same comfort with which He has given us. Often there seems to be no rhyme or reason to pain and hardship. Yet, we can take joy in this: God is with us. That is what Emmanuel means! As we avail ourselves to being a part of a Life Group or Share Group, we not only share in the burdens of another, but we are able to express our struggles. The Spirit of Christ (the presence of Emmanuel) shows up when two or three are gathered together in His name.

Reading the Text

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?
2. What are you going to do about it?
3. How can we help you?

In Closing

Who is our source of comfort? The apostle Paul declares: “God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort!” There will be trials, challenges, and yes, suffering. Life itself often brings unexplained difficulty. But just because we go through hardship does not mean God no longer loves us (see Romans 8:35-39). Paul says: “We are confident that as you share in our sufferings you will also share in the comfort God gives us” (v7). Sharing life together as brothers and sisters, through Life Groups and Share Groups, means we love at a deep level. Real love costs; real love takes work – fully devoted followers of Christ will choose to love the way Christ has loved us. Jesus said, “This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:12-13).

In Life Groups, we are on a pilgrimage together. We bear burdens, share joys, share pain. We are accountable to one another because each one counts – we matter. Did you know Jesus was in a Life Group; yes, the Lord called to Himself twelve disciples with whom He could share life and ministry. When the Lord sent out His disciples, He sent them out in small groups and pairs and gave them authority to do ministry in His name. “Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: ‘... Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received’” (Matthew 10:7). In doing life together, as Jesus did, we get to see the sick healed, the dead raised, and sinners delivered. We become a partner in miracles.

Close in a Time of Prayer asking:

How can I pray for my fellow Life Group participants this week?

Essentials

Text: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Plain Truth:

Small Groups are the _____ place for life
_____.

1. God is the _____ of all _____.

2. We must actively _____ in the
_____ that God _____ us.

One Year Bible Readings

- August 28: Job 28:1-30:31, 2 Corinthians 2:12-17, Psalm 42:1-11, Proverbs 22:7
- August 29: Job 31:1-33:33, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, Psalm 43:1-5, Proverbs 22:8-9
- August 30: Job 34:1-36:33, 2 Corinthians 4:1-12, Psalm 44:1-8, Proverbs 22:10-12
- August 31: Job 37:1-39:30, 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:10, Psalm 44:9-26, Proverbs 22:13
- September 1: Job 40:1-42:17, 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, Psalm 45:1-17, Proverbs 22:14
- September 2: Ecclesiastes 1:1-3:22, 2 Corinthians 6:1-13, Psalm 46:1-11, Prov. 22:15
- September 3: Ecclesiastes 4:1-6:12, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:7, Psalm 47:1-9, Prov. 22:16

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