



Week 7- "Pain"

At the beginning of a New Year we tend to look at the areas of our lives that we want to change and grow in. We seem to know that there are areas in our life that need to change. In this week's message we explore what Christianity teaches, not about how we can change ourselves, but how we can lean into how God changes us.

1. Do you find it hard to talk about the pain and suffering that you experience in your life? If so, why is that hard for you?
2. How does it make you feel to think about the idea that sometimes God intentionally uses pain and suffering to help you grow and heal?

In the message Justin shared 4 categories of pain that we experience:

- **Pain, as a result of the broken world that we live in.**
- **We feel pain when we put our trust, hope, meaning in something that isn't trustworthy, hopeful, or can give our lives meaning.**
- **When a loving God cuts off our branches that try to find life in things that hurt us.**
- **We feel pain when we choose to die to our sinful desires ourselves.**

Read Romans 8:18

3. When have you bumped into pain that is caused by the reality that our world is broken?
4. When have you found yourself disappointed because you put so much hope in something that could not give hope to you?

5. A good gardener will cut back vines when they are attaching themselves to things that will hurt it. Does this imagery help you trust that God is good and will do the same thing in your life when something is harmful for you? Why or why not?

6. With the pruning imagery in mind, when have you experienced God doing this in your story? How would you describe the experience?

Read Romans 8:12

Choosing to put to death our desires (success, personal gain, dreams, anything in the world we try to find meaning in) is painful, but like the passage says when we die to ourselves we will find life.

7. What makes dying to self so painful, and when have you experienced the life that comes from it?

8. Would you say you're in a season of pain right now? If you're comfortable, which of the 4 categories of pain are you experiencing?

9. In what ways do you think God is inviting you to trust, hope, and find life in Him?

10. What step can you take this week to trust that God is a good gardener that wants to take the pain you're experiencing and use it to help you grow and heal?

11. How can this group support you through this season?

In the book "How Does God Change Us" Dane Ortlund says: "When life hurts, our eyes are being lifted off of the unstable things of the world onto the stable God of the Bible." That can be hard to understand and accept especially if you are experiencing pain right now, but God does deeply love you. Jesus went to the cross and suffered the worst kind of pain for us. He is kind enough to cut off the things in our lives that hurt us, and He uses the pain of this broken world to bring us life. Will you lean in and trust the process to a God that loves you and wants to bring you life?