

3 WEEKS

WHEN GOD DOESN'T MAKE SENSE





TABLE OF CONTENTS

WEEK 1

When God Seems Inattentive 3

WEEK 2

When God Seems Late 6

WEEK 3

When God Seems Uncooperative..... 8

Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group 10

Group Agreement..... 11

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WHEN GOD SEEMS INATTENTIVE

WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Have you ever felt you heard clearly from God? If so, how did that happen?

Big Idea:

Just because God is silent, doesn't mean God is absent.

Key Scriptures:

Mark 15:34

"And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Psalm 22:1-2

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest."

Habukkuk 1:13

"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?"

Psalm 139:7-12

*"Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you."*

Hebrews 13:5

"God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Proverbs 19:21

"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails."

Discussion:

1. Share about a time in your life when God was seemingly silent or absent. How did it turn out?
2. *Read Mark 15:34.* Clearly Jesus was expressing a great sense of God's seeming silence in the midst of His most excruciating pain. How does Jesus' question help you when you have your own question of God's presence in your life?
3. *Read Psalm 22:1-2.* These words are penned by David, but later quoted by Jesus as he hung on the cross. How does this encourage you to cry out to God when you struggle with anguish?
4. *Read Habukkuk 1:13.* The prophet expresses extreme disappointment that God isn't showing up when he thinks he should. Share a time when you have felt a similar struggle.
5. How does this passage encourage you to speak frankly to God

about your frustrations?

6. *Read Psalm 139:7-12 and Hebrews 13:5.* In what ways does this passage remind you of God's continual presence?
7. *Read Proverbs 19:21.* There are times in the midst of our plans that things happen we don't understand. What is something you need to stop trying to understand and just trust God with?
8. Discuss in your group some things you can do when God seems inattentive.

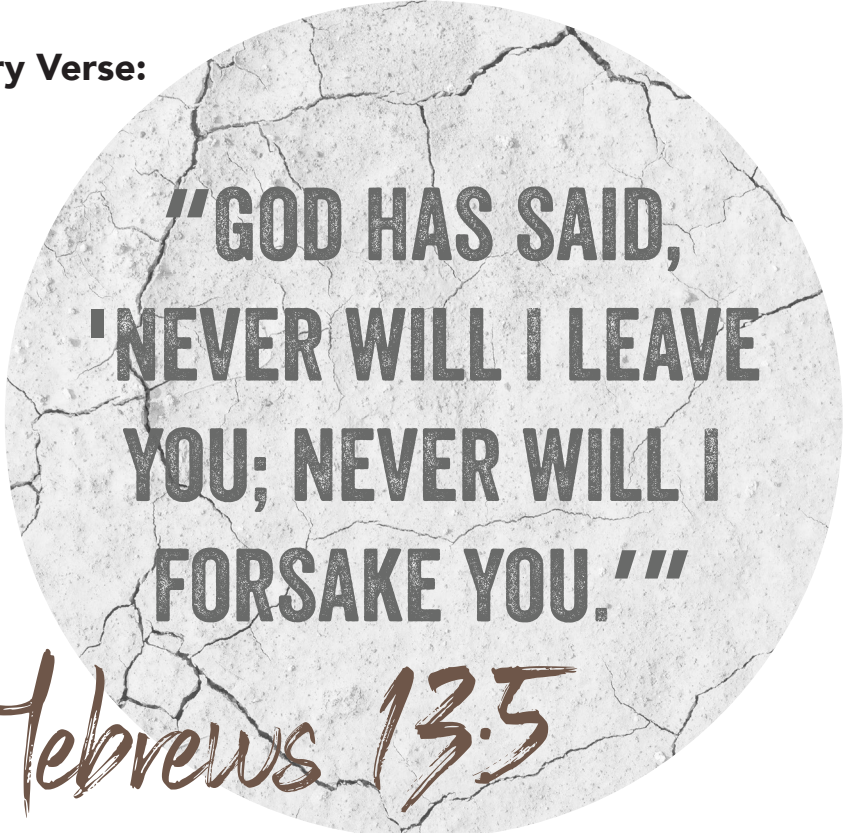
Wrapping It Up:

Pray for one another to be assured of God's presence, even in the midst of the most painful of circumstances.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for Andre' Mubarak as he brings his Israel presentation to Sunnybrook this week.

Memory Verse:



**"GOD HAS SAID,
'NEVER WILL I LEAVE
YOU; NEVER WILL I
FORSAKE YOU.'"**

Hebrews 13:5

WHEN GOD SEEMS LATE

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Are you a person who shows up early, right on time, or is consistently running late? What contributes to your tendency?

Big Idea:

With God, a waiting season is never a wasted season.

Key Scriptures:

Read the story of Lazarus and his sisters in John 11:1-44.

Isaiah 40:31

"But those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Psalms 27:14

"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

Discussion:

1. After reading John 11:1-44, discuss how it must have felt to Mary and Martha when Jesus did not come right away after they sent for him.
2. According to His own words, what was Jesus' reason for delay?
3. Discuss together a time in your own life when you felt God was delayed in His response to you. How did you react in this situation?
4. Are you currently in a waiting season? If so, share with the group.
5. Read Isaiah 40:31 and Psalm 27:14. What promises does God give for those who wait? How might these verses encourage you today?
6. What can you do to allow room for God to make miracles out of your disappointments?

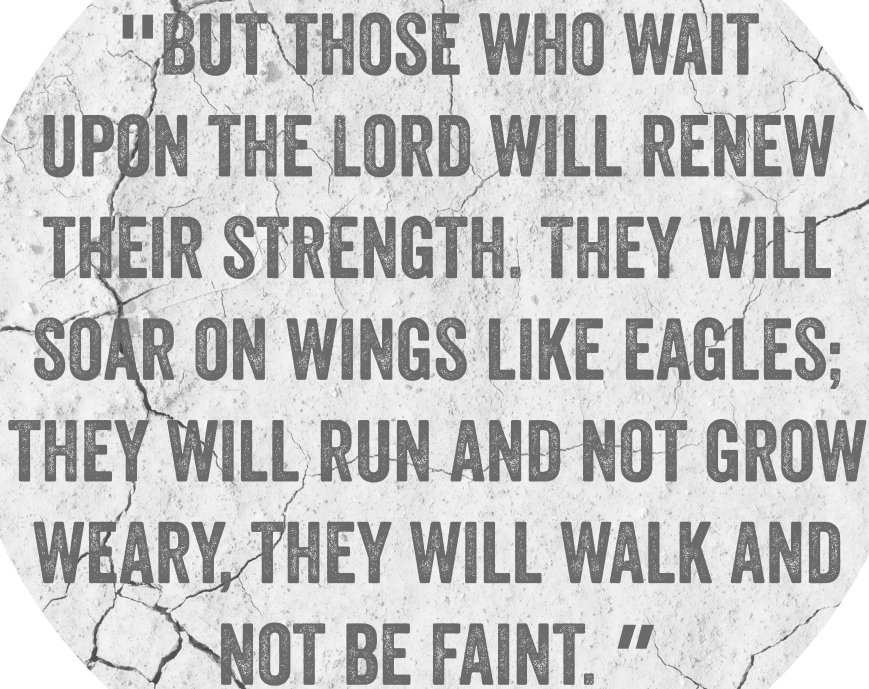
Wrapping It Up:

Pray for each of the people in your group who are currently in a season of waiting.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for the Membership Class that will meet this week and next.

Memory Verse:



**"BUT THOSE WHO WAIT
UPON THE LORD WILL RENEW
THEIR STRENGTH. THEY WILL
SOAR ON WINGS LIKE EAGLES;
THEY WILL RUN AND NOT GROW
WEARY, THEY WILL WALK AND
NOT BE FAINT. "**

Isaiah 40:31

WHEN GOD SEEMS UNCOOPERATIVE

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Share in what ways you most like or need to be in control.

Big Idea:

Prayer reminds us that we're not in control and keeps us close to the One who is.

Key Scriptures:

2 Corinthians

12:7-10

"Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But [God] said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight

in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Discussion:

1. How do you typically deal with not being able to be in control?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. How did Paul deal with his own lack of control in an area of weakness in his life?
3. What do you learn about prayer in Paul's situation?
4. What conclusions did he come to?
5. What do you learn about God's character and intent through Paul's situation?
6. Be honest. What's something you need or want, but it feels like God just won't cooperate?
7. What would you have to do differently to realize God's grace is simply enough?

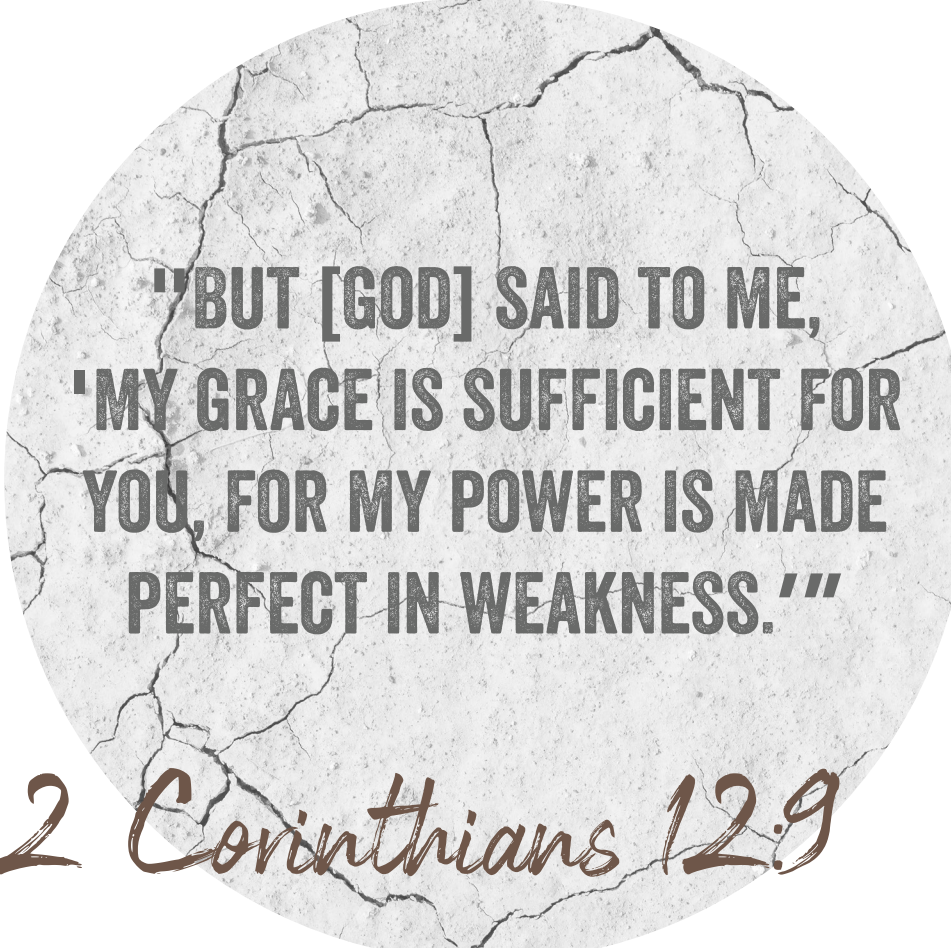
Wrapping It Up:

Share with your group one particular thing you would consider a "thorn" in your life. Then pray for one another, that you would each receive and depend upon God's grace in that area.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our "Week Before" services next week. And for preparations for our upcoming Easter service.

Memory Verse:



**"BUT [GOD] SAID TO ME,
'MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR
YOU, FOR MY POWER IS MADE
PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.'"**

2 Corinthians 12:9

Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
- Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____



SUNNYBROOK
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