

Parting Words
Why Bother?
John 16.16-33
Small Group Discussion

Intro Questions (try to get everyone involved in discussion):

- What is an example of an experience you have willingly engaged in, even though you knew it would be difficult or painful?
- Have you ever wondered why it's worth following Jesus, even though you know it will be difficult? What kind of circumstances have led you to ask this question?
- In today's passage, Jesus is continuing to brace his disciples for the immediate difficulty that lies ahead. But his words show us why we too can follow him in spite of the difficulty.

Pray: Invite the Holy Spirit to be present and to guide your discussion of God's word.

Read John 16:16-33, then discuss the following.

- What impending event is Jesus explaining in v. 16 and vv. 19-20?
- Based on your knowledge of Scripture, how would you define joy?
 - How do you know that joy is at the heart of Jesus' communication here?
- Look at Jesus' use of the childbirth metaphor, in vv. 21-22. Based on your life experience, do you agree that "when [a woman's] baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world?" Why or why not?
 - How did this metaphor apply to the immediate, impending events of Jesus' death and resurrection?
 - With regard to our lives, Jesus seems to be saying that **With Jesus, all of our anguish in life is like birth pains**. Discuss what this concept means practically.
 - How does this observation enable you to be joyful in the midst of hardship?
 - Have you had an experience where you were able to experience the joy of something being "birthed" even while the pain was still present?
 - How is it that Christian joy *and* hardship can co-exist?
 - Is there any circumstance in your life presently that feels like "birth pains?" Where are you in the process of being able to take joy in that situation?
 - *(For deeper study)* Read Isaiah 26:16-19. Several Old Testament prophets contain similar uses of this childbirth metaphor. Would these prophecies have been in the minds of Jesus' disciples? How might they have affected how the disciples interpreted the metaphor?
- In vv. 23-28, Jesus points forward to a time when **his followers will have the joy of coming to the Father in Jesus' name**.
 - What do you think it means to come to the Father "in Jesus' name?" How does it differ from using a magical formula?

- On Sunday, Pastor Josh gave several descriptions or definitions of what this means. Discuss each one, as listed below. Which resonates the most with you?
 - *It means that God hears us and answers us on the basis of what Jesus has done.*
 - *We get special, VIP access to the Father, because of Jesus.*
 - *God responds to our prayers just as he responds to his own Son.*
 - *Praying in Jesus' name is coming to God on the basis of what Jesus has done.*
 - *God "answers each prayer as if we had asked, knowing what he knows" (quoting Tim Keller).*
- Jesus speaks, at the end of v. 24, as if coming to the Father in this way is an indispensable part of having your joy be complete. Why might that be the case? How can you cultivate this kind of relationship in prayer?
- How can this kind of approach to the Father in prayer produce both humility and confidence?
- What has changed about the disciples' demeanor in vv. 29-30? Why this change?
- In vv. 31-32, how might Jesus' words have deflated his disciples? Is there any warning for us here, in times when we are especially confident in our own faith?
- In view of vv. 31-32, what is surprising about Jesus' statement in v. 33?
 - How does this statement connect back to Jesus' overarching intent in this passage?
 - **Jesus' accomplishment overcomes even our inadequate faith.** How can this truth be a great source of joy for you? Have you already experienced it to be so?
- In what way was the cross itself a "childbirth" experience for Jesus?
- Think back over all that we have discussed tonight. In this current moment in your life, which of these items most helps you to persevere in your love of Jesus? Which is the hardest to embrace?

PRAYER:

- In your prayer time, pray for the difficult circumstances that may have already been mentioned. Pray for one another's ability to find joy in the midst of hardship. Come to the Father in the confidence that you are coming in Jesus' name!
- If you haven't already shared about other particular needs in your life, be sure to do that, and pray for one another.