

Finding Peace in Life's Storms

Unshakable Faith for Uncertain Times

Small Group Study

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Week 1

Read Roman 8:28

Discussion: Does this verse mean that everything that happens to us is good? What about natural disasters, when a child dies of cancer or someone is killed by a drunk driver?

Leader: *Not everything in your life is meant for your immediate benefit. We live in a fallen world. The Bible promises everything, not some things, even those things not meant for our benefit, will eventually fit in in God's plan for our life. God promises His plan for your life is for your benefit.*

Discussion: Why does God not keep us from the storms?

Leader: *God's ultimate goal for us is character not our comfort. God's plan for delivering us from a storm is greater than our need for relief from the storm. God's ultimate goal for us is character, not comfort. Our character comes from circumstances. Our comfort is not a priority for God's plan.*

Discussion: What does God want from us in times of trouble?

Leader: *Faith is just like a muscle and grows by exercising it. Faith is believing God is in control and is He is always with us working His plan for our life. God will not allow a storm without having a positive purpose in our life. God is more interested in changing you through your storms than in removing your storms.*

Closing: *Can you think of times when God stepped in and changed the circumstances and changed you in the process in ways you never expected?*

Week 2

Read Romans 5:3–5

Question: If someone asked you to visualize an abundant life, what would it look like? Would it involve suffering?

Leader: *Most people would not have a difficult time describing their version of an “abundant life” It would be a life of more certainty, less pain, and fewer unknowns. It would involve many things, but not generally suffering.*

Read James 1:2-4

Question: What is the difference between the world vision of abundant life and God’s vision of abundant life and what it means for us?

Leader: *God’s vision of abundant life is eternal; our vision is temporal, involving much more of this world. We need to get our vision of abundant life more in line with God’s. The focus is not on this world but the things in it that we think will make us happy. The more we interpret the events in our lives with an eternal meaning, the more abundant our lives. Interpreting life with an eternal significance is what makes the Christian life make sense for us. God allows us to suffer because we are selfish and need help focusing on the eternal.*

Closing: *What are some ways every day we can focus on the eternal. What are some ways we can keep from focusing on the temporal?*

Week 3

Discussion: What does God want from us in times of trouble?: How are you supposed to act during times of trouble?

Leader: *When we face adversity, we are drawn closer to God. Our suffering is how God matures us. We simply do not develop in the same way without trial as we do with trials. The majority of time when trials come, God is testing us. He wants to see how we react. When we go through trials, God expects our trust. He loves us and is using the trial to mature us.*

Re-read Roman 8:28

Question: Have you see someone who is stuck in life? They are confused and discouraged by their situation and just cannot get out of the rut. If God promises to use *everything* that happened in our life not *some* things, what do you think we are doing that gets us stuck. What are we doing that prevents God from working in our lives?

Leader: *We like to live being prepared for what is to come in life. We like to know a cause and effect: this thing happened because of that. Living without knowing “why” or being prepared for what is to come, makes us uncomfortable. The key to not getting stuck is to live without an understanding of “why” or where we are going. We must learn to respond to trials without getting stuck on “why” and put your trust in God that He is in control.*

Closing: *What are some ways we can show God each day we trust him in the storm?*

Week 4

Read Phil 3:14

Question: What do you think Paul meant by pressing on?

Leader: *In order for you to move to the direction of God and allow Him to work in your life, you must learn what it means to press on. Pressing on is a decision we make to be faithful and continue on, while waiting on God to change our situation? Remain faithful and focus on who God is and not what he can do for us. We remain in faith believing whatever comes our way; God will eventually work it out for good.*

Question: Why do you think moving forward is so important to us when we face trials?

Leader: *Asking “why” is usually our first response. Knowing why does not help us move forward. Moving forward is an act of faith- faith in our creator, faith in His purpose for our life, faith in His plan for our life. If we have faith in his promise, He will work out anything that happens to us.*

Closing: *Have you faced times in your life that you were unable to move forward? Have you faced times in your life when you did move forward? What was the result?*

Week 5

Leader: *Last week we discussed the importance of pressing on during trials. This week we are going to look at some ways to help us keep moving forward. Moving forward is how God changes us and our circumstances. We must learn how not stand still. The first thing I want to look at is peace.*

Question: When you hear the word peace, what comes to mind? If you were to paint a picture of peace what would it look like?

Leader: *The type of peace mentioned in the Bible is spiritual peace. It is peace that operates in the middle of a storm, not peace created from the absence of storms. The world's version of peace is everything going your way, but it leaves the second it sees trouble. Spiritual peace works for both good times and storms.*

Question: Where does peace come from?

Leader: *Our peace comes from God's presence in the storm, not from God preventing the storm.*

Question: What do we need to do to have peace?

Leader: *If we are created in God's image, He is in us. We have the characteristics of God in us. One characteristic is peace. No need to pray for peace; we have it already. We just need to make sure our circumstances do not interfere with our peace*

Closing: What are some ways we can make sure life does not interfere with our God given peace?

Leader: *People who are able to maintain their peace have lives rich in thankfulness. God does not need our praise, but we need to give it. He is glorified when we do. Instead of arising every day with the weight of the world on your shoulders, focus your thoughts on God. We are thankful for what God has provided and what He will provide in the future.*

Week 6

Question: Have you ever had times in your life when God changed your circumstances in ways you did not expect? How would remembering God's past faithfulness help us with present trials?

Leader: *Remembering how God has brought you through past storms helps when facing the present storm. It creates a sense of anticipation of what God is going to do. If you want God to work more through your trials, thank Him for what He has already done for you. Focus on how He led you through past trials. Anticipate how God will lead you again. Celebrate how God will use the circumstance to bring glory to Him and change you in the process.*

Here is a prayer you can use:

“God, you have guided and sustained me through tough times before, and I expect You to do it again. Show me your glory. I know you are at work. I cannot wait to see how. Allow my tough times to bring more glory to you. Use these tough times to mold me as you wish.”

Leader: The great enemy of focusing on God faithfulness is worry: anybody every worry?

Question: What is your definition of worry?

Leader: *Worry is trying to figure out tomorrow, today.*

Question: What does the Bible say about worry?

Read Matthew 6:33–34

Question: Do you think worry is helpful? Then why do we do it?

Leader: *Worry does not move God to action. Sometimes we seem to think it does. The Bible says God is working in your life at every minute, in ways you do not see or understand. God is trying to teach us to trust Him to direct our steps. God's will is done through us, not apart from us. He is actively at work in our lives, to fulfill His will. We must trust God to see us through and know His plan is for our benefit.*

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

Question: What does this verse say to you?

Leader: *Worry may make you feel better, but it ignores God's command to trust Him. It is a sin! Stop dwelling on what is wrong with your life. Don't magnify your problems with worry; magnify God. When you get up in the morning, praise God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do. Live life amazed. Begin the day with a sense of anticipation of what God will do that day. What are you worried about? The creator of the universe is in control. He created you and has given you a plan and a purpose for your life. You have the power of God inside of you. How can you worry?*

Week 7

Question: If a person gets drunk and kills someone while behind the wheel, is this the will of God? How does sin affect God's plan?

Leader: *If humans have a choice, then our will must sometimes intersect with God's will, because our choices will not always be God's choice. Otherwise we would never have a choice, because everything that we chose would be predestined by God and what God wants. We would be robotic followers of God's*

Question: If we are free to choose, our choices sometimes will be wrong and conflict with God's will. Then what happens?

Question: Was it the will of God to put Jesus to death? Or was it the sinful actions of Judas, Pilate, and many others that accomplished this?

Leader: *Not everything that happens to us is the will of God. It was not the will of God for His Son to be put to death on a cross. The will of God was for this world to accept Him, repent of their sins, and follow. Circumstance brought about by evil men caused Jesus to be put to death. In those circumstances the will of God for man's redemption was achieved. The higher goal of salvation was brought about through the evil (sin). God allowed those circumstances to happen but did not allow them to defeat His ultimate purpose, which was salvation.*

Question: Is cancer the will of God?

Leader: *Perfect health is the will of God. A body free of disease is more effective for God than one with disease. But people get sick anyway, sometimes because of environment, and many times by our own actions. If you drink and smoke and overeat, you may die prematurely and probably will get sick along the way. There is a will of God within sinful circumstances. God allows the sickness, which moves us to Him and toward His will and brings glory to Him. Through the sickness (tough times) God brings change. There is that possibility of sickness (tough times) but also the possibility of our reaction to the sickness that brings so much glory to God that the sickness is justified.*

Week 8

Question: If God knows our minds and what we need better than we ourselves do, should we even bother to pray? Do you only pray at trials?

Question: What is the purpose of prayer?

Leader: *The ultimate purpose of prayer is to be dependent upon God*

Question: *What can you do to make your prayers more powerful?*

Leader: *There are several reasons our prayers are not as powerful as they should be:*

- *Read James 4:2, People just don't pray.*
- *They don't go to God boldly. We need to discipline ourselves to go to God with the same fever (boldness) as we bring to God when problems are choking us.*
- *We don't release our problems. One way to tell if you are truly releasing your problems to God is to note whether you are still worrying or thinking about them. If you have done your part, trusted God to do what you cannot do, then why are you worried?*
- *Read Proverbs 10:24 , We don't pray with a clean heart. Key word is righteous*

- *How we posture for prayer: The Bible does not give a required posture for praying .Some Christians tend to make this too religious, thinking there should be a certain posture or certain words for God to hear.*

Week 9

Question: What is the Holy Spirit?

Leader: *The Bible promises that when you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, you become born again. Once born again, you receive the power of God. The power of God lives inside of you in the form of the Holy Spirit .*

Question: What are things we can do to enable the Holy Spirit in our daily lives?

Leader: *The power of the Holy Spirit is given to us so that we can do things that we cannot do by ourselves. It is the power of God available to believers to strengthen us through our daily life and our storms.*

Question: When people do not feel the power of God, why is that?

Leader:

- *living with known sin: in order for the Holy Spirit to operate you must be cleansed*
- *not having developed the daily disciplines: To be filled with the Holy Spirit, we need to develop the daily disciplines of prayer and Bible study. We have to continually renewing our mind, which is done through the daily disciplines. God releases His power to us while we are engaged in the daily disciplines.*