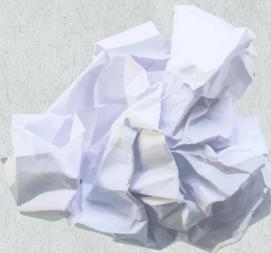


4 WEEKS

**it's ok
not to be
Ok**



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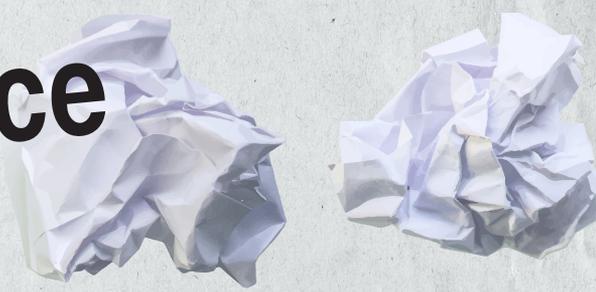
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divorce



WEEK 1

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

In what ways has your life been impacted by divorce? Parents? Friends or family? You? Share your experience.

Big Idea:

Despite the disappointment, hurt and pain of broken relationships, there is hope and healing in Jesus.

Key Scriptures:

Psalm 88 "Lord, you are the God who saves me; day and night I cry out to you. May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry. I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death. I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like one without strength. I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave,



whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care. You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. Your wrath lies heavily on me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape; my eyes are dim with grief. I call to you, Lord, every day; I spread out my hands to you. Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do their spirits rise up and praise you? Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction? Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion? **But I cry to you for help, Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before you.** Why, Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me? From my youth I have suffered and been close to death; I have borne your terrors and am in despair. Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me. All day long

they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me. You have taken from me friend and neighbor—darkness is my closest friend.”

Malachi 2:16 “The man who hates and divorces his wife,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “does violence to the one he should protect,” says the LORD Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.”



Discussion:

Read Psalm 88 together and discuss the following:

1. When you read the words of this psalmist, what stands out to you?
2. What do you imagine the psalmist may have been going through that they would pen these words?
3. Can you relate to the words of this Psalm? Ever felt this depth of despair? Share with your group about your experience.
4. Divorce and broken relationships can often result in the most gut wrenching pain one ever experiences in life; pain that is perfectly characterized in this psalm. Aside from the broken relationship itself, what outside circumstances can contribute to this pain?
5. What is your typical posture when someone you know or are acquainted with goes through a separation or divorce?
6. Regarding divorce, there are two extreme postures people tend to take: either it's taken lightly, as if any slight unhappiness is grounds for divorce, and it's no big deal, or, divorce is the worst sin, and one who goes through a divorce should be avoided like the plague. Discuss the problem with these extremes.
7. As followers of Jesus Christ, what should be our posture in response to divorce?
8. Read Malachi 2:16. Compare the “violence” done to one who should be protected, with the pain characterized in the Psalm. What does this tell us about the gravity of divorce and the pain it causes?

9. Despite the heaviness of this ongoing lament, the writer opens the psalm with an acknowledgement that God is the God who saves. How might you be encouraged or bring encouragement to another with this truth?

Wrapping It Up:

Discuss as a group how you can be sensitive to the pain of those going through separation or divorce who are not OK. How might you be an instrument of bringing hope and healing in their process?

Prayer Focus:

Pray for those that you know are going through a separation or divorce. And do something tangible to encourage them, including sharing with them about DivorceCare. (find out more at sunnybrookchurch.org/support-groups)



Memory Verse:

"But I cry to you for help, Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before you." Psalm 88:13

loneliness

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

When have you felt the most alone in your life?

Big Idea:

We will all face loneliness at some point in our lives, what will we do with it?

Key Scriptures:

Genesis 1:26 "Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."



Genesis 2:18 "The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Psalms 22:1-11 "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. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises. In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. "He trusts in the Lord," they say, "let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been

my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help."

Psalm 130:1-2 "Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy."



Luke 5:16 "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

Discussion:

1. Read Genesis 1:26 and 2:18. We see in Genesis 1 that God existed in the plural sense – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit- in community with one another, creating a single man. But Genesis 2 points out that aloneness is not part of the intent. Abbio Odio says, "To be made in the image of God is to be made as a people who long for perfect connection." Discuss this concept.
2. Discuss how being created from community, for community, impacts the condition of loneliness.
3. Read Psalm 22:1-11 Again this week, we read words of despair poured out to God in the midst of the psalmist's deep pain. How do you relate to these words? Have you ever experienced this depth of loneliness?
4. Walk deliberately through this psalm identifying each feeling or emotion the psalmist is experiencing. How can God's presence be a remedy to that loneliness?
5. Loneliness is not just the absence of people, but can be described as an unfulfilled longing. An unfulfilled desire, a lost sense of purpose or identity, or a feeling of exclusion can all contribute to loneliness. Discuss the circumstances that may lead to loneliness. (lost job, empty nest, broken relationship, etc.). How might these circumstances be a catalyst for spiritual growth?
6. Read Psalm 130:1-2 When is the "not OK" of loneliness OK?
7. Read Luke 5:16. Jesus' response to the constant clamor around Him was to

withdraw to lonely places. How does He demonstrate how aloneness can be important to our ability to combat loneliness?

Wrapping It Up:

Jesus sought out lonely places, because there He found the community He was created for, community with God. He found he was and is never alone. As you face moments of your own loneliness, follow His example.

Prayer Focus:

Identify and pray together for those in your group or in your sphere of influence who are experiencing loneliness. Consider also praying for Sunnybrook's Street Medicine and Jail Ministry who reach out to the lonely.



Memory Verse:

"Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy."
Psalm 130:1-2

suffering

WEEK 3

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

How do you typically react to suffering, either your own or that of others?

Big Idea:

Suffering is and can be greatly used by God to shape individuals and for the display of His glory.

Key Scriptures:

Job 1:1-5 "In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among



all the people of the East. His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom."

Job 1:13-22 "One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one



who has escaped to tell you!" While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may

the name of the LORD be praised." In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."

Job 2:4-5 "Skin for skin!"

Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

Job 2:9-10 "His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!" He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. **Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said."**

Job 23:1-7 "Even today my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning. If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say to me. Would he vigorously oppose me? No, he would



not press charges against me. There the upright can establish their innocence before him, and there I would be delivered forever from my judge."

Discussion:

1. Read Job 1:1-5 and 13-22. What kind of person is Job and how was he perceived by the people of Uz?
2. What is Job's reaction when calamity falls upon him and his household?
3. Read Job 2:4-5, 9-10 What's the main question upon which Satan is challenging God? And how does Job's response to his' wife's rant debunk Satan's theory?
4. Consider Mrs. Job's attitude and counsel to Job in verse 9. How common is this attitude among people when things are not OK?
5. Read Job 23:1-7. Do you think it's OK to question God? Why or why not?
6. What would your small group look like if it was a place where it is OK not to be OK? If that is not the case currently, what steps might

you take to get there?

Wrapping It Up:

Some of the best stories we hold dear are of those who suffered, but God used that suffering to shape that person and to bring glory to His name. People like Helen Keller, Louis Zamperini, Anne Frank. Discuss some of the best stories you know that give you inspiration.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for your group to be the kind of group that has grace and compassion upon one another when you're not OK. Pray to be judgment free, even when things seems the worst.



Memory Verse:

"Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"
In all this, Job did not sin in what he said."
Job 2:10b

doubt and disappointment

WEEK 4

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Describe a time when someone you trusted let you down. How did you feel?

Big Idea:

It's OK to have doubts and disappointments when it comes to your relationship with God.

Key Scriptures:

John 20:25 "So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he [Thomas] said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

Matthew 28:17

"When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted."

Lamentations 1:7-8

"In the days of her affliction and wandering, Jerusalem remembers all the treasures that were hers in days of old. When her people fell into enemy hands, there was no one to help her. Her enemies looked at her and laughed at her destruction. Jerusalem has sinned greatly and so has become unclean. All who honored her despise her, for they have all seen her naked; she herself groans and turns away."

Lamentations

3:1-24, 31-33 "I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of the Lord's wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. He has besieged me





and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. He has walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains. Even when I call out or cry for help, he shuts out my prayer. He has barred my way with blocks of stone; he has made my paths crooked. Like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding, he dragged me from the path and mangled me and left me without help. He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows. He pierced my heart with arrows from his quiver. I became the laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day long. He has filled me with bitter herbs and given me gall to drink. He has broken my teeth with gravel; he has trampled me in the dust. I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord." I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. **Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of**

the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him."
... For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone."



Jude 1:22 "Be merciful to those who doubt..."

Discussion:

1. Read John 20:25 and Matthew 28:17. Discuss circumstances where you may have found yourself doubting God.
2. Read Lamentations 1:7-8. Lamentations is a book written by people who are not okay, to people who are not okay, and for people who are not okay. And even though for centuries, God had repeatedly warned Israel through the prophets that He sent, it must have been a shock to actually experience the judgment that had foretold because of their sin

and disobedience. This once powerful nation had been stripped bare, and there was no one to help or comfort her. Imagine if the U.S. were suddenly stripped bare of our power and we lost our freedom and prosperity. How do you think you would feel to be recipient of this judgment as a nation?

3. Verse 8 gives insight into the reason for their suffering – “Jerusalem has sinned greatly.” For many of us, our doubts about God may be our way of avoiding accountability for our own choices. It’s much easier to blame God and wallow in our disappointment than it is to admit our own wrongdoing. How difficult is it in the midst of your own suffering to admit that, in part, it may be a result of your own actions? Can you recall a time when you wanted to blame God, but you eventually realized your own culpability?
4. Read Lamentations 3:1-22, 31-33 together. In this passage, Jeremiah the prophet, who actually warned Israel, pours out his lament in the midst of his

own suffering. Discuss the two tones of his lament – first declaring the affliction God had imposed upon him, but then declaring God’s faithfulness in the midst of that affliction.

5. How does this encourage you in the midst of your own doubts and disappointments?
6. If there’s any message in Scripture that declares it’s OK not to be OK, it’s in the book of Lamentations. Jeremiah felt no need to put on a happy face – he is brutally honest before God. How difficult is it for you to be this vulnerable before God? What is standing in your way?
7. Jeremiah’s honesty allowed him to come full circle to a place where he could praise God. He remembers his affliction, the bitterness and the gall. He remembers his downcast soul. Yet, he says, Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope. Because of the Lord’s compassion, we are not consumed...” There it is, that thread of hope. Discuss what hope you have and can give in the midst of suffering.

Wrapping It Up:

Read Jude 1:22. And remember to be merciful to those who doubt. Especially yourself.

Prayer Focus:

As a group today, pray for Sunnybrook's Celebrate Recovery ministry. Many who are part of this ministry are suffering from the consequences of their own sin, struggling with doubts, and desperately need to come to place where they can see the Lord's great love and compassion.



Memory Verse:

"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail."

Lamentations 3:21-22

NOTES:

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.
 - Ephesians 4:1-3
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 _____



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