

Praying for you. 🙏

Don't bother.

**I WANT TO
BELIEVE, BUT...**

God didn't listen.

HEARTLESS GOD

Start with an Icebreaker Question



To start off your small group, briefly share your response to the following question:

If you could ask God ONE question in a face-to-face conversation with Him, what would you ask? Share with your group.



Please Read What To Expect

Let's get a big picture of what we'll be learning today...

In a fallen world where bad things happen to good people, it can be difficult to believe in a supposedly almighty God who allows so much pain to take place. In this session, we will discuss God's heart, and a Fatherly love that surpasses all of our understanding.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

At this time, please break into smaller groups of 2-4 for the discussion question section. Have a great discussion!

1.) *“Why does God let so many bad things happen in the world if He truly loves us?” or “How can I believe in a God who doesn’t care about my pain?”* Understandably, these are a couple of common questions that many people seem to wrestle with. Miscarriages, innocent deaths, domestic abuse, cancer, and loved ones with other terminal illnesses - this is just a small list of things that causes many people to doubt that God even exists.

Have you or anyone you know ever struggled with these, or similar, doubts about God? Share with your group.

2.) When our spirit gets dampened by the struggles and demands of life, it can be so easy to develop a way of thinking that God isn’t fair. Thankfully, when life gets us down, there are a couple of truths in God’s Word that we can cling to in times of desperation and pain.

The first is that *God always has a purpose in our pain*. When people let us down, when we lose a loved one, when we’re taken advantage of, and even when we experience something minor like an inconvenience in the middle of a busy day, God is always using the difficult times to do something in us. He doesn’t always *cause* the pain, but He can *use* the pain to grow us every single time. In the following passage, the Apostle Peter models an excellent perspective when facing trials:

“There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold - though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.” (1 Peter 1:6-7)

How is your attitude when you know you’re about to have a challenging day? Share with your group.

3.) It’s also so important to know and remember that God is always *present* in our pain. It is such a common misconception to believe that God must be absent from our lives while we’re struggling through painful times. On the contrary, He is right there with us. We see a declaration of this promise in the following Psalm:

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1)

Do you remember a time when God gave you great comfort and strength in a time of need? How did He do so? Share with your group. (*i.e. He sent friends to comfort and encourage me after I lost my spouse, God used someone to anonymously bless me financially after I was laid off, etc.*)

4.) We all have developed a “need” for something or someone that we believe will help us during times of despair. However, when everything and everyone else fails us, God is the one that remains constant. We often want God to give us what we want while God is trying to show us that *He* is all we need.

“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 weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Is there anything or anyone that you normally run to during times of despair? What can you do to remind yourself to turn to God first? Share with your group.

5.) When we grasp the heart behind this passage, we will begin to recognize that our times of weakness can truly be our strongest times when we trust in the Lord, and that God is the only one that matters and the only thing we need. When we can’t do it, He can!

If everything that you own and everyone you love were stripped away from you and all you had was Jesus, would that be enough for you? Share with your group.

6.) Lastly, many of us have the tendency to accuse God of being unfair for allowing bad things to happen to good people and for allowing so much pain and despair to exist in the world. Read the passage below:

“He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:10-12)

Although it may be hard to believe sometimes, God is a very *just* God. While we were far from deserving of it, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for our sins so that we could have an everlasting life. This act of love and mercy was committed by a God who is *just* in all of His ways.

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

Have you ever struggled with accepting something because you felt that you didn’t deserve it? Share with your group.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

When thoughts of skepticism begin to cloud our mind in the midst of a world filled with pain and hurt, it's good to remember that God knows what it's like to hurt more than anyone. He hurt when He made the greatest sacrifice of love that anyone could ever give: the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. Our God is not a heartless God. He is a God that loves beyond our comprehension because He *is* love.

Consider taking the following action steps:

i. When you're faced with a challenge, thank God for the growth that will come from it.

ii. Pray for the following points:

- Trust that God has a purpose for our pain (*1 Peter 1:6-7*)
- Be encouraged that God is always with us in our pain (*Psalms 46:1*)
- Find contentment in Christ alone (*2 Corinthians 12:9*)
- Allow God to be our strength in our weakness (*2 Corinthians 12:9-10*)

iii. Pray for a friend

There may be someone in your life who has been wrestling with the same or similar thoughts of doubt in God. As we're going through this series, God may want to use you to help someone overcome these thoughts. In the month of September, New Hope Windward will be kicking off a new church series called, "Overcomer". In this series, we will learn about overcoming obstacles, challenges, pain, and even doubt.

This week, think of at least ONE person God may be asking you to invite to this next series and begin praying for this person. In next week's small group session, we will learn more about the importance of this and *how* to go about reaching out to others for God's Kingdom.

**This week, I will pray for _____
to invite them to church.**

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Take a few minutes to close your time together with prayer and to pray for each other's prayer requests. Below is a sample prayer to read if you choose to. You can also choose to write down each other's prayer requests to remember throughout the week.

Sample Prayer:

"God, thank You for who You are. You are a God who shows relentless, unconditional, unending love toward us because You are love. Father we know that Your ways are higher than ours and we may not always understand what You're up to, but we can rest in knowing that You are good. Teach us to trust You. In our times of pain and despair, remind us that You are right here with us, holding in the palm of Your hand. God we also pray for the courage to invite people to church! Father we love You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Group Prayer Requests:

Name

Request

PRAYER: DAY 15 | AUGUST 26

SCRIPTURE: “Come near to God and He will come near to you.” (James 4:8)

PRAYER

“Heavenly Father, You have promised that if I draw near to You, You will draw near to me. I need more of Your presence today, and I am drawing near to You through prayer, worship, and reading Your Word. I open my heart to You and ask You to be near to me and change me to be more like You.”

PRAYER: DAY 16 | AUGUST 27

SCRIPTURE: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

PRAYER

“God, You promise me in Your Word that in all things You work for my good. Right now, there are circumstances in my life that don’t feel good and that I can’t see an ounce of good in (talk to God about the specific situations that are causing you difficulty or pain). Even though this is how I feel, I choose to believe Your truth over my feelings. When you say You will work in all things for my good, I believe You. Even in situations that seem hopeless, I know You are working on my behalf and that You want more for me than I could ever want for myself. Thank You for having a purpose for me and for working all my life circumstances for good.”

PRAYER: DAY 17 | AUGUST 28

SCRIPTURE: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

PRAYER

“Father, my heart feels anxious (tell God what is giving you anxiety). I don’t like this feeling, but I’m thankful I can come to You and receive peace. You invite me to replace my anxiety with prayer, and even though my mind and heart are racing, I’m coming to You knowing that You provide healing and calm for my soul. Thank You for giving me breath and life. I thank You that I am fearfully and wonderfully made in Your image. I lay down all worries, all my physical and mental anxiety, and any attempt at trying to control it all (tell Him the things you are laying down right now). I surrender it all to You. I need You. I need Your peace that transcends my human understanding. Even if things are unstable around me, I pray that Your peace will be evident in my heart and my life. Guard my heart and mind, God. I trust that You are faithful, and I receive Your peace in my life today.”

PRAYER: DAY 18 | AUGUST 29

SCRIPTURE: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.’”

(Jeremiah 29:11-13)

PRAYER

“My God, I try to make so many plans for my life, but I know Your plans for me are best. You tell me that You have plans for me to prosper and have hope and a future. Thank You for loving me enough to have a plan for my life. You have promised me that when I call on You, You will listen to me. Thank You for listening when I pray. I am confident knowing that I serve a God who cares about my life. I want to find You every day, and You say that if I seek You with all my heart, I will find You. Thank You for showing me the way to You. I lay my plans down at Your feet and receive Your plans for me (mention your plans and lay them down before God). I know that You see the big picture and You know what is better for me than I do. I trust You, and I ask You to guide me toward Your plans.”

PRAYER: DAY 19 | AUGUST 30

SCRIPTURE: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

PRAYER

“Lord Jesus, I am so tired and worn out (tell God the areas that you’re tired and weary). I feel exhausted mentally and physically. Life feels hard, and I feel like I can’t keep up my current pace. You invite me to come to You when I am weary, and I fall at Your feet desperate for rest, peace, and perspective. Show me where I am trying to do things on my own. Show me where I need to rest instead of strive. Teach me Your ways. Show me how to walk in gentleness, humility, and rest. I know Your ways are higher than my ways, and I pray that You will transform my heart and mind to be more like You.”

PRAYER: DAY 20 | AUGUST 31

SCRIPTURE: “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’” (Psalm 91:1-2)

PRAYER

“God, I claim that I dwell in Your shelter, the Most High God, and I rest in Your shadow, the Almighty One. I claim that You alone are my refuge and fortress. You are my God and I trust You. When I face anything that brings me uncertainty or fear (confess these things to Him), I know that I can come to You as my safe place. Thank You for Your strength and protection in my life.”

PRAYER: DAY 21 | SEPTEMBER 1

SCRIPTURE: “Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” (Psalm 103:2-5)

PRAYER

“Father, in the Name of Jesus, I come before You asking for healing (name yourself or someone you are praying to experience healing). My hope is in You as our healer. I believe You are able to do this. Your name is Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals, and I believe every knee will bow to You including the name of (name disease or disorder). Thank You, Jesus, for dying on the cross so that we can receive healing. You say that You forgive our sins and heal our diseases, and I praise You for this. Thank You that the spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us. I stand in faith believing for healing for (yourself or someone you’re praying for). Nothing is impossible for You, God! Give us peace and direction as You work in our lives. In Jesus Name, Amen.”

