

WHEN GOD DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

1. SHOCK

ICEBREAKER



If this is a new group or there are new people, please take a moment to **introduce yourselves.**

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

What's the first thing you want to do when we finally get "back to normal" after this pandemic is over?

Share with your group.

WHAT TO EXPECT



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

Sometimes something so incredibly devastating happens to us that we are shaken to our very core. It can be extremely personal, like the death of a loved one or a spouse walking out on us. Or it can be something we go through with others, like a world-wide pandemic. When painful difficulties happen, what used to make sense often doesn't make sense anymore. But understanding how we respond to these times is the beginning of the battle. In this session, we will learn how to deal with the shock of extremely difficult experiences.

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Tip: BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE. Uncomfortable silences are bound to happen. It's okay! A long pause during a group discussion can be powerful. A *pause* gives space for quieter people to break into the conversation; silence allows people to figure out exactly what they would like to say.

Tip: CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT. If possible, what is said in small group, stays in small group. One motto groups use is: Share "nothing, to nobody, never" outside of the group.

ONLINE Tip: MUTING OF MICROPHONES. Get familiar with the Zoom features on your electronic device. It is helpful for everyone to know where the mute button is located. Ask the attendees to self-mute to avoid outside noise when someone else is talking & sharing. Doing this will help with the flow of your SG discussion time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.) During social distancing, quarantining, and lockdown, many of us faced confusion over what we were supposed to do and how we were supposed to act. Others of us faced boredom. Some faced job loss or anxiety. And even some faced the pain of loss.

What does God do in these situations?

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.

(Romans 8:28 - NLT)

If we read this too fast, we may be mistaken about how God works. This verse does not say that everything that happens is good. It also doesn't say that everything is God's will. What it does say is that God will bring some good out of everything we go through. This isn't a promise for everyone but for those who "are called according to His purpose for them." In other words, God promises to bring some good out of everything His followers go through.

Think back to the last time you faced a major struggle in life that you prayed and sought God about it. What are some of the good things He brought out of the bad situation? (Ex. You came to Christ or came to church, you prayed more, you read the Bible, you learned skills you never would have learned, it prepared you to help others, etc.)

2.) When we face troubling times, we all want to push fast forward on the event and get past it as soon as possible. But the reality is, there will be other problems just ahead.

Think about it. You could say that each of us is coming out of a struggle, going into a struggle, or in the middle of a struggle. Often, we don't know what's just ahead.

People can never predict when hard times might come. Like fish in a net or birds in a trap, people are caught by sudden tragedy.

(Ecclesiastes 9:12 - NLT)

We never go looking for trouble, but often trouble comes to find us. But the most influential moments in our lives are often the ones we didn't see coming. When we are caught by sudden tragedy, here are two things we should all do:

1. Call Out to God

*Call to Me when trouble comes; I will save you, and you will praise Me.
(Psalm 50:15 - GNT)*

2. Call Someone for Help

*Two people are better off than one...If one person falls, the other can reach out and help.
(Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - NLT)*

When you are going through troubles, do you find it harder to call out to God or call someone for help? Why do you think that is?

3.) You may be going through a struggle right now. But if you're not, chances are you know someone who is. Galatians 6:2 says we should each offer a helping hand when we see someone else in need.

In the book of Job we read about how he faced some of the most horrific struggles a man could face. In the second chapter, his friends come to visit. They offer a great example of how we should respond.

When three of Job's friends heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they got together and traveled from their homes to comfort and console him. When they saw Job from a distance, they scarcely recognized him. Wailing loudly, they tore their robes and threw dust into the air over their heads to show their grief. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. No one said a word to Job, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words.

(Job 2:11-13 - NLT)

Here are three things they did that we can do also:

1. *Sit with Them*

Many times, people just need to know you're there. You can lend a hand, cook a meal, offer to babysit. Or you can just sit with them and be present.

2. *Share Their Pain*

Next, we need to empathize with them. That means we feel what they feel, we weep with those who are weeping. We don't need to say much. In fact, the greater the grief the fewer the words. Often the greatest ministry we can give others is the ministry of listening. *Listen instead of fixin!*

3. *Show Them Kindness*

It doesn't matter if it's big or small, when you help someone who is struggling it's like lifting a mountain off their shoulder. Don't be tempted to think that what you're doing isn't big enough or good enough.

Please review the steps above, which one can you do this week to help someone in need?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?



We often can't see the troubles that are just ahead. So when they do come, it feels like life doesn't make sense. We even think God doesn't make sense! Our response is what really helps put things back in order and in the right perspective.

This week, if you are going through troubles, will you:

- **Call out to God, and**
- **Call Someone for help?**

This week, if you see someone else going through some troubles, will you:

- **Sit with Them,**
- **Share Their Pain, and**
- **Show Them Kindness?**

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, we admit that sometimes You don't make sense to us but even in those times, we are going to choose to trust You. We trust You to hold our future in Your hands. Help us this week by strengthening our faith as we call on You and call for someone for help. When others are grieving and hurting, please help us to sit with them, share their pain and show them kindness just like You do with us. In Jesus' name we pray, amen."

Group Prayer Requests:

Name

Request

Find Time To Read God's Word



The Power of Feeding on God's Word Daily

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" "

Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

As we read God's word, we begin to see how God responds to things. Doing daily devotions re-patterns the way we think and transforms the spirit of the mind. Then, when we face similar situations as Jesus did, we begin to respond in the same way.

Doing devotions is an excellent way to record, process, and share what God is speaking to you. It's also a useful tool to use at a later time to reflect on and review some of the "gems" that you have received. Without writing these down, you may forget God's promises and some very important life lessons! While doing devotions is a very personal time with the Lord, you may want to share some of your daily devotions with your family, friends, co-workers, or small group. Through discussion, you may be able to look deeper into what God is speaking to you, gain new insights, and even encourage others.

Sample Devotion

SCRIPTURE

“If you do not carry your own cross and follow Me, you cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:27)

OBSERVATION

Self-sacrifice is a prerequisite for discipleship. Self-centeredness has no place in the life of a Jesus follower.

APPLICATION

It can be hard to focus less on self and more on Jesus, but when we do we are living out the very commands of Jesus.

PRAYER

God, help me to live a selfless life by always focusing on what You want instead of what makes me happy, comfortable, and content. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE...

Whenever you possibly can, do good to those who need it. (Proverbs 3:27 - GNT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. (1 Corinthians 1:3-4 - NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God. (Isaiah 43:2 - NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. (2 Corinthians 4:8-10 - NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever. (Revelation 21:4 - NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...
