

“When the Grind Grinds You Up” *The Grind- week #4*

In the 16th Century a Carmelite monk known as St. John of the Cross described what he referred to as the Dark Night of the Soul- those trying times when we don't feel God's presence or His consolation, even when we desperately seek it. St. John came to an interesting conclusion. God allows us to go through these times of trial so that we grow. Our faith grows, our perseverance grows, our trust in God grows, not because of the circumstances, but in spite of them.

Looking back on the hardest times of your life, how would you say God used them to grow you spiritually?

But there will come a time when God will bid them to grow deeper. He will remove the previous consolation of the soul in order to teach at virtue.

St. John of the Cross

WRAP-UP

Sometimes life's circumstances will overwhelm us. We aren't always able to handle everything that's facing us. In those times we yearn to have God's comfort and intervention, but what do we do if God is silent? David wrestled with this and intentionally brought to remembrance God's truth and His faithfulness. He stood against what the circumstances he saw and instead believed what he knew was true about God, that He is good, and He is loving. It is in times such as this that we grow deeper still in our faith. We can choose to say "I will praise you" in the darkest times of our lives.

Memory Verse

Psalm 42:5-6a NLT - 5 Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again--my Savior and 6 my God!

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

Challenge- Is there someone in your life who is feeling overwhelmed? Find a way to support and encourage them this week.

INTRODUCTION

Most of us are able to find a rhythm in life that allows us to juggle everything, even when we are juggling much more than we really should. But then when we get that curve ball thrown at us, like illness, job loss or family problems, it can tip the scales to a point beyond our capacity to cope. In our best-case scenario God would step in and make everything right again. But what do we do if that doesn't happen? What do you do when the world is crumbling around you and God is silent? This kind of situation isn't unique. In fact, King David dealt with long stretches of grief, pain and lament. He recorded just such a time in the Psalm 42. Let's look at how David responds when the grind grinds you up.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

What was the last "curve ball" you fielded that threw your schedule off course?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Where is God?

David was a man after God's own heart. Although he had his ups and downs, it was always God who saw him through. But in Psalm 42, when David was in the throes of pain and anguish it seems God was nowhere to be found.

Psalm 42:1-3 NLT – 1... As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. 2 I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him? 3 Day and night I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, "Where is this God of yours?"

When you read this passage, how does David describe his need to connect with God? It appears David was desperate. In verse 2 the Hebrew uses the term *nephesh*, or my soul, thirsts for you. Every ounce of David's being needed God, but still he was continually assaulted by the enemy with no relief in sight.

Has there been a time in your own life when the bad news kept coming but you just didn't sense God's presence? If so, what were some of the thoughts you had about why God was distant?

Did you experience doubts, insecurity, anxiety, or fear? If so, you are not alone, you were in a spiritual battle. Satan takes advantage of these times to affirm your doubts and insecurities and to play off of your emotions. But luckily, we don't have to stay in that place.

2. I Will Remember

Psalm 42:4 - 7 NLT - 4 My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks amid the sound of a great celebration! 5 Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again--my Savior and 6 my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember you--even from distant Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan, from the land of Mount Mizar.

David did not stay in the place of tears and despair. He chose to remember God's faithfulness and the relationship he had enjoyed with God and other believers. In the Old Testament there was a practice of marking a place to remember God's faithfulness. In 1 Samuel 7:21 we see a large stone placed by Samuel to remember "Up to this point the Lord has Helped us!" This practice is helpful to all believers.

1 Samuel 7:12 NLT - 12 Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer (which means "the stone of help"), for he said, "Up to this point the LORD has helped us!"

What would you say is your Ebenezer, or point of remembrance, when God was faithful to you? At the times you feel distant from God or experience insecurity about your relationship with Him, bring to mind your Ebenezer. Speak it out loud that God has shown Himself faithful to you before and you can put your hope in Him in any situation. You can choose to praise Him, not because of circumstances, but because of who He is.

3. What you Believe vs. What you Feel

Psalm 42:7-11 NLT - 7 I hear the tumult of the raging seas as your waves and surging tides sweep over me. 8 But each day the LORD pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life. 9 "O God my rock," I cry, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I wander around in grief, oppressed by my enemies?" 10 Their taunts break my bones. They scoff, "Where is this God of yours?" 11 Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again--my Savior and my God!

As David concludes this Psalm the battle is far from over. The assaults continue but now David recognizes that truth about God. What truth about God does David state in verse 8? Contrast that with the taunts of the enemy in verse 3. This is the classic struggle between believing the truth of God or the lies of the enemy.

John 14:6 NLT - 6 Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

John 8:44 NLT - 44 For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.

We have been told that seeing is believing. But sometimes what we see stands in opposition to what God says is true. If we believe that Jesus is the truth, then we will exercise our faith in Him, despite what circumstances may tell us. How is faith defined in Hebrews 11?

Hebrews 11:1 NLT - 1 Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.

In Psalm 42:9 David asks two very poignant questions, "Why have you forgotten me?" and "Why must I experience this grief?" We might also ask these questions when we are in the darkest times of our lives.