

Peace: In Troubled Times

Week 1 LifeGroup Study Guide

Introduction

It doesn't take much looking to find trouble in our world; if I were to guess I would say that this is true for every generation that has taken a breath in this old world. Today's 24 hour news cycle, along with the voluminous amounts of news that is instantly splashed across the internet, only seems to affirm that we are living in troubled times, not unlike other generations throughout history. From the uncertainty of our upcoming elections, to the terrorists around the world and even in our own country that blow things up in the hopes of killing innocent people. There is even trouble in the church as we continue to see headlines about the decline of Christianity and all of the nones and dones that are apparently all around us who have simply given up on God. In the midst of all of this bad news, where do we turn to find peace?

The question before us for the next four weeks is, "Where can we find peace, even in the midst of troubled times?" To begin with we are going to look at the prophet Habakkuk, a short prophetic book that ends up dealing with some very important questions. We will also look at the crucifixion and Paul's experience of losing everything yet, in losing it all, Paul gains everything.

Peace and Troubled Times in Your Life

Youth and family guru Rich Melheim, in talking about the importance of Highs and Lows as a family, says if you don't know your kid's high for the day you don't know your kid, and if you don't know your kid's low for the day, you don't know your kid. **Go around your group and share what might be giving you peace today, and what might be troubling you today.**

Pray

God, we give you thanks that you are not far off, but you have come down to earth in your Son Jesus Christ. Remove all false hope in us that we might cling to Jesus for our peace. Amen.

Session 1 Readings

Isaiah 44:9-20 and Habakkuk 1:1-11

The first reading in Isaiah 44:9-20 addresses the absurdity of worshiping idols. Read the text out loud, what did you hear? What point is Isaiah trying to make? Do Isaiah's words still resonate in our world today?

What two things is Isaiah comparing?

In the day of trouble God wants us to turn to Him alone, in fact He has given us the second commandment for this very reason. God gives us His name that we may call

on in in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, but also so that we might call upon in the day of trouble. God so loves us that he is adamant that we call upon Him alone, and no other gods because He knows that He is the only one that can actually do something about it, especially when it comes to our last enemy, sin and death.

Knowing God wants you to call upon only Him do you hear Isaiah's words differently?

The preaching text for this week is from Habakkuk 1:1-11 and includes this opening lament "How long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen?" Here Habakkuk lays out his opening complaint against God. Hear Habakkuk's words in the midst of any troubles you might be having.

Read the text out loud, what did you hear?

In the first four verses Habakkuk lays out his complaint, that God is allowing the Gentiles, their enemy and an unrighteous people, to come in and cause trouble for them. *"Destruction and violence are before me, so that the law becomes slack and justice never prevails...judgment comes forth perverted."* Is this something we can relate to today?

In verses 5-11 God responds to Habakkuk, telling him to look among the nations and see the divine work that brings the Babylonians to Judah. God is doing something here, God is punishing Judah with an even more unrighteous people, the Babylonians.

In using the Babylonians God shows that he can use anyone to accomplish his divine will. He can even use the Babylonians whose "justice and dignity proceed from themselves....their own might is their god!"

We know that Judah has fallen away from God, they have been worshiping false gods and idols, and they have not listened to the prophets who have come and called them on their sinfulness. So God sends the Babylonians to punish Judah. God is not comforting souls here, instead He is repenting them of their sins. Habakkuk asks God how he can do this, and God simply says it is a divine work that you would not believe.

Closing

Close your time in prayer.