

Talk It Over

Good News In Tough Times

(Week 2)

When You Are Stuck In The Middle Of Nowhere

SMALL TALK

1. Have you been feeling “stuck in the middle of nowhere” lately? If so how? If not, why not?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Psalm 13.** Do you see phases and progression in this Psalm? Where do you see Questioning/Challenging? Where do you see Humbling/Asking? Where do you see Trusting/Praising? How did David, though still struggling, move from one phase to another?
3. **READ Isaiah 49:14-16.** What is the immediate picture that produces this outcry? What is the answer, and God’s bigger picture? Can you think of how your own pain causes you to believe a lie about God’s love or care?

GETTING PERSONAL?

4. If you are feeling like you are stuck in the middle of nowhere (being tested in the wilderness), are you allowing it to draw you away from God’s promises or are you allowing it to press you toward trusting his promises?
5. How can you journey with others right now?
6. What are you focusing on that is not helping?
7. What are you focusing on that is helping you to remember the Good News in Tough Times?

MAKING PROGRESS

8. Our first and most important core statements is: “Love God Wholeheartedly” Have you noticed that your love for God has been in one of the phases described in Psalm 13 (Questioning/Challenging? Humbling/Asking? Or Trusting/Praising)? Talk about that with someone. Has our current crisis caused you to be stuck in a

phase?

May 17, 2020

Good News In Tough Times

2-When you are stuck in the middle of nowhere

People say time flies when you're having fun, but when things shift into a minor key, life seems to move in slow motion. We often find ourselves thinking, "I don't know if I'm ever going to get out of these circumstances."

I. Watch out for the lie of ISOLATION

Psalm 13:1-2 (NIV) {1} How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? {2} How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

This verse contains a recurring question: "How long? How long?"

David's circumstances aren't described, but he clearly feels forgotten and forsaken—a feeling we all can relate to.

I've had many ask me how long will it be before we open up in person services? It's a valid question. We are asking that one too; and we have a team working on it for your safety and the safety of for the safety of our community.

To be isolated from human relationships is, without question, crushing, but what David writes of here is even more significant. He's expressing a feeling of isolation from God, Himself. That is something we can also relate to. If you have ever felt close to God, feeling spiritually dry and distant is a very difficult thing to go through. And yet, David, who is known for his heart after God, and known for being a worshiper, felt it. What does he do? How does he address this sense of feeling distant from God?

He changed the focus of his cry.

Change the focus of your cry.

Psalm 13:5-6 (NIV) {5} But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. {6} I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me.

How do you explain this? How does he do this? How did he change from the outcry of frustration to the declaration of trust and praise?

A. Sometimes what you FEEL to be true does not align with what you KNOW to be true.

Sometimes in a state of emerging depression or full blown depression, your perception does not reflect reality. Sometimes when you are bone tired, what you feel doesn't match reality. Sometimes when things are very difficult, your feelings don't match reality. This is especially true when you are going through a season of difficulty.

Isaiah 49:14 (NIV) But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me."

Israel feels like the LORD has forgotten them in Babylon. Only when you remember the big picture does this seem odd. When you feel stuck in the bad part of the movie, the question makes perfect sense to you.

But God reminds us of the big picture! Here is what we read next. The truth cuts right through the feelings.

Isaiah 49:15-16 (NIV) {15} "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! {16} See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.

What do we do with what we feel then? God's love is better than any earthly love.

From an Old Testament standpoint, the torn down walls, the rubble hurt God too, like his hands were engraved!

From a New Testament standpoint, He has engraved us on the palm of his hands with a more personal pain. I can't help but think this is one of those veiled references to the scars from the cross.

B. EMOTIONS can feed us lies.

Followers of Jesus, let's not believe the lie of isolation that our emotions can feed us. We can find rest in God's comforting response to His forgetful people here in Isaiah.

We sometimes forget God, but God cannot forget us.

Watch out for the lie of ISOLATION: *How can you journey with others right now?*

C. God's Care Is CONSTANT

God's care is constant, regardless of what is happening around us to make us feel otherwise. "*His steadfast love endures forever.*" -- Psalm 136 (26 times)

Like The Sun

God's care for His children is like the sun: it's constant. Even when the clouds obscure it, the sun is still there. It's *always* there. It's even there at night. We are even held in place, while orbiting around it. The sun is a symbolic reminder of God's constant care, and in reality God is more constant than the Sun!

Speaking of being held together in the orbit of the Sun...

II. Watch out for COUNTERFEIT escape ROUTES

The gravitational pull of the son holds us in place

There are other competing pulls...

Deuteronomy 8:2 (NIV) Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

Deuteronomy 8:3 (NIV) He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

Jesus quoted from this passage about being tested in the wilderness while he was being tested in the Wilderness. (See Matthew 4 and Luke 4)

Jesus succeeded where Adam (in the Garden) and Israel (in the Wilderness) failed. (Mark 1, Matthew 4, and Luke 4)

The Wilderness season that could have been measured in days through a direct route, ended up being measured in decades of pointless wandering! You can read about this in Numbers 13 and 14.

A. God will TEST you not TEMPT you

Wilderness serves as a thermometer that takes your spiritual temperature. The wilderness test reveals how far away you are from God or how close you are to God.
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B. God only FEELS far AWAY

In the Wilderness every step feels like a struggle. The struggle does not mean that God is far away. The feeling does not mean that God is actually far away. In the Wilderness for Israel, his

presence was visibly leading them. Mark 1 tells us specifically that it was the Holy Spirit fully anointing Jesus that led him there. God was not far away. The testing only causes him to FEEL far away.

C. God will take you THROUGH IT

He took those who trusted him and followed him through the wilderness to the promised land.

Deuteronomy 8:16 (NIV) He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you.

This is the good news in any wilderness experience with God. He will take you through it and in the end it will be better than before you went through it. He takes us through that it might go well with you! It will go well with you if you humble yourself and trust God's will and Word.

D. Your FOCUS Makes All The DIFFERENCE

Numbers 11:5-6 (NIV) We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. {6} But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

Numbers 11 tells the narrative of how the older generation of Israel had the wrong focus. It distorted their sense of reality. They wanted to return to their more comfortable... **bondage** as if that was better!?! Just like Esau they wanted to trade their birthright for something tasty!

What do you choose to remember? How he redeemed you from bondage to sin? And how God is faithful to lead you through tough times? Or do you choose to remember the pleasures you are missing out on, and turn from being faithful to God as he leads?

Watch out for COUNTERFEIT escape ROUTES: *What are you focusing on that is not helping? Your focus makes all the difference.* Jesus, chose to focus on God's word, trust God's faithfulness, and worship and serve God alone.

We've All Been Exposed

by Sarah Bourns (written by someone in New York at the height of the New York death toll)

We've all been exposed.
Not necessarily to the virus
(maybe...who even knows).
We've all been exposed BY the virus.

Corona is exposing us.
Exposing our weak sides.
Exposing our dark sides.
Exposing what normally lays far beneath the surface of our souls,
hidden by the invisible masks we wear.
Now exposed by the paper masks we can't hide far enough behind.

Corona is exposing our addiction to comfort.
Our obsession with control.
Our compulsion to hoard.
Our protection of self.

Corona is peeling back our layers.
Tearing down our walls.
Revealing our illusions.
Leveling our best-laid plans.

Corona is exposing the gods we worship:
Our health
Our hurry
Our sense of security.
Our favorite lies
Our secret lusts
Our misplaced trust.

Corona is calling everything into question:
What is the church without a building?
What is my worth without an income?
How do we plan without certainty?
How do we love despite risk?

Corona is exposing me.
My mindless numbing
My endless scrolling
My careless words
My fragile nerves.

We've all been exposed.
Our junk laid bare.
Our fears made known.
The band-aid torn.
The masquerade done.

So what now? What's left?
Clean hands
Clear eyes
Tender hearts.

What Corona reveals, God can heal.

Come Lord Jesus.
Have mercy on us.