

CREW Bible Study

Message – What To Do When You Don't Know What To Do - - Week 4

- **BOTTOM LINE:** When you don't know what to do, remember that your problems can position you for a purpose.
- **GOAL:** To help students understand that while pain exists, God can use it, and their faith can grow through it. There is more to their story than the painful situations.
- **SCRIPTURE:**
 - *Genesis 40:1-8 - Sometime later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. 2 Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. After they had been in custody for some time, 5 each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. 6 When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?" 8 "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."*
 - *Romans 8:28 - 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.*

MESSAGE

Imagine you sit down with a friend to watch a Netflix series. They're on season 4, but you've never watched the show before. Your friend is surprised or shocked by what just happened in the show, but you don't understand why. Your friend knows the backstory. You don't. To you, what just happened in the show seemed pretty random. But then your friend fills you in on all of the drama that took place in seasons 1, 2 and 3. Now, what just happened seems way more interesting and compelling, and not so random at all.

Chances are, you've also felt this way in your own life at some point. There has probably been a time when you've had to work through pain, problems or struggles. Times when....

- People made fun of you and it seemed like you had no friends.
- You were diagnosed with a learning disability.
- You disappointed your parents.
- You were injured and had to go through therapy.
- Someone you love got really sick.
- A family member or close friend passed away.

The painful stuff. The real life stuff. The stuff that makes us wonder, “what do I do now, because I don’t know what to do?”

It’s at these times when we wonder, “why is this happening to ME? Why am I going through this? Why is this happening NOW?” And just like you felt watching that Netflix series with your friend, you don’t understand *how* or *why* this fits into the story of your life. It just feels random, hurtful and hard. What’s the point?

Sometimes we do see the point *after* the fact – when it’s part of our backstory. Like a broken friendship. Although it was really hard to break away from that person, you realize that the friendship led you to make some bad decisions. Or you realize that they were constantly manipulating you. Whatever the case, you didn’t like *that* version of yourself very much. So even though it felt bad at the time to break away, you’re now actually glad that it happened because you feel free.

Sometimes we even see the point *in the moment* – when the difficult thing is actually happening. Maybe you were struggling in Algebra, failing perhaps. And it was on you. You weren’t putting forth the effort. You got called out and started seeing a tutor who held you accountable for doing your work. And your grade went up. It wasn’t fun, but it was for the best. And the study habits you learned applied to other subjects too.

It’s nice when we can see the point, but many times difficult things can just feel pointless. And in these moments, we struggle to find answers. In real life, unlike a show on Netflix, our difficult circumstances don’t get solved and resolved in a matter of minutes. But when we find life confusing or difficult, we can actually learn what we can do by looking to people who have handled similar situations – which brings us back to the life of Joseph.

For the past few weeks we’ve been looking at some of the events of Joseph’s life. To recap.....

- He was sold into slavery by his own brothers.
- He was taken to Egypt where he worked for a high-powered official.
- He was falsely accused of doing something he didn’t do and was thrown into prison.

He went from free boy to slave to prisoner, with a tiny taste of success in between. If anyone had earned the right to ask, “What’s the point? Why is all of this happening to ME?” It was definitely Joseph.

And that’s where we pick up his story – with Joseph in jail for a crime he didn’t commit. But in jail he makes some new friends. Hear this story in Genesis, chapter 40, beginning with verse 1:

Sometime later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. 2 Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. After they had been in custody for some time, 5 each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. 6 When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?" 8 "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

The men went on to tell Joseph their dreams. God had given Joseph a unique talent for interpreting dreams. With God's help, Joseph told them what they meant. And then, what Joseph said would happen, really did happen! Based on the dream the cupbearer had, Joseph said he would be restored to good favor with the Pharaoh again – and he was! As for the baker, Joseph said his future was in jeopardy. And it was. Joseph got it right on both counts.

Now, you might think that the cupbearer would have praised Joseph for helping him interpret his dream, especially given that things turned out really well for him. But the cupbearer basically forgot about Joseph. And Joseph remained in prison. He was probably tempted to wonder, "What was the point in that? Why did I even bother helping them? It didn't help my life get better at all. I'm still right here in jail."

But then, about two years later, Pharaoh had two dreams that really troubled him. He desperately searched for someone on his staff who could tell him what they meant, but no one could. And that's when the cupbearer – the one who was in jail with Joseph – remembered what Joseph had done for him. He told Pharaoh about him, and Joseph was taken out of jail and brought in to the king's palace to help. Joseph interpreted the Pharaoh's dream with incredible accuracy. And as a result, Joseph was given a job again, eventually earning the rank of second in charge over all of Egypt!

When we put this event into the big picture of his life, we see that Joseph's challenging and difficult circumstances uniquely positioned him to be in the right place at the right time to do something great – something only he could do.

And the same is true for you and me. Hard things will happen in your life and my life. And it's important for us to know that just because something happens doesn't mean it was something God did to you or wanted for you. The truth is, people sin. God created us all with free will. And we have free will to sin. People do things that hurt. Things happen that aren't fair. Things happen that don't make sense to us. People hurt each other and it can create a continuous cycle of hurt. But, when it seems like it's impossible that anything good can come out of a situation,

remember that God is really good at doing the impossible. He can take that difficult time and make you better because of it.

Here's two things to remember:

1. **Remember that no one else has your life story.** Your difficult circumstances aren't fun, but they are unique to you. They put you in a position to learn, to grow, and to discover things that no one else can. God is using your tough stuff in ways that you can't imagine. He's shaping you in ways that no one else has been shaped. Because he's shaping you to be uniquely you. That may not make it easier, but it may give you a different perspective.
2. **Remember that your story can interact with others.** Although no one else has your life story, many people do face similar situations and you could be a voice to help them through their challenges and pain. And you wouldn't have been able to help if you hadn't gone through it yourself. You can become a person who looks around, sees other people's struggles, and says, "Oh, you feel that? Me, too! Oh, you're experiencing that? I've been there too!" You can help in ways that only you can help.

Leave room for God to tell a new story in your difficult circumstances. And when you don't know what to do, remember that your problems can position you for a greater purpose.

FAMILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Imagine there was a movie about your life. What would be on the movie poster and why?
2. How can problems, disappointments, or letdowns affect your relationship with those around you? How can they affect your relationship with God?
3. What is a difficult situation – in your life, or even in our society in general – that you hope God can use but you can't see how right now?
4. When someone is hurting, what are some things that people say or do that are helpful? What are some things that people say or do that are not helpful?
5. It's important for us to remember that just because something happens doesn't mean it was something God did to you or wanted for you. The truth is, we have free will and people sin. We have been given the free will to make our own choices and that sometimes means that people hurt people. Does this change your perspective of God?

6. Have you ever been in a difficult situation, then heard someone else's story about how they made it through something similar? Did that impact you? Why or why not?
7. Has there been a time when you were able to help someone else through a difficult situation because you had been through it yourself? Share your story.
8. Read Romans 8:28. It can be tempting to understand this verse as saying God will make all of our problems go away, but we know that isn't always the case. What are some ways God may use a situation for good without making it go away?