

Connection

Describe a day you've had when everything seemed to go wrong.

Content: God is always present, even when times are tough.

There has probably been a time you wondered, "Why is this happening to me?" Last week, Billy described the lessons learned from his recent much-needed sabbatical. This week he recalls the lessons learned in the adversity of an earlier forced "sabbatical" due to a severe illness. In our darkest hours, God has much to teach us about Himself and our need for Him.

Adversity and the mystery of God.

What if adversity, pain and suffering are God's catalyst for revealing Himself more and enabling you to trust Him deeply? Read Deuteronomy 29:29. God wants to be known. Deuteronomy says, "The things revealed belong to us and to our children forever...."

1. When things are going very badly, what step could you take to focus your mind on God and listen for the thing He may be telling or teaching you about Himself?
2. What does it mean to relinquish your life to God?

Adversity and the presence of God

Read Deuteronomy 31:8. God is with his people. "He will never leave you." That is the promise in this verse. In the silences that come with adversity, God is there. In that place, He renews our strength (Isaiah 40:31a). He hears our cries and saves us (Psalms 145:18-19).

3. When someone close to you is suffering, what words might you use to suggest that God cares and wants to be near them?

4. What is the role of the Bible in your life? What time of day could you set aside to read it consistently?

5. Psalm 103 says God "remembers that we are dust," yet he loves us "from everlasting to everlasting." How might this enable you to praise God, even in hard times?

Adversity and the Good News of God

God will transform you as you endure adversity. Read Romans 5:3-5. The product of suffering is described here: perseverance, character, hope. James 1:2 tells us to face trials with pure joy for the same reason.

The best thing that ever happened to us is that we were saved through the suffering of Jesus. Now, Jesus enters our suffering and transforms us through it. Colossians 1:27 takes us back to the "riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you."

6. Is Christ in you? Ask Him, and He will be. If He is in you, how would you describe to a friend what that means to you?

Commitment

Will you set aside a quiet time and read Lamentations 3:19-26? Read it like a prayer and consider its words about suffering and adversity: "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail."

Challenge Assignment: Someone you know is suffering. Reach out to that person and offer to sit by quietly, pray, or read to them the verses from this lesson.