

session 12 study guide

family crises

starter

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? Think about how you would respond to each of the crises listed below, and then write your answer in the space provided.

1. You get home from an afternoon out with friends and realize your wallet is missing. What would you do?

2. At a fancy restaurant before prom, you spill tomato sauce all over your suit/dress. What would you do?

3. In the middle of your presentation to your English class, you completely blank out as to what to say next. What would you do?

4. Your house catches fire and you have minutes to evacuate. What would you do?

5. Your parents sit you down and explain you were adopted. What would you do?

message

The loss of a job. The death of a loved one. Abuse. Alcoholism. Violence. Family crises can occur at any time and have devastating effects. God does not promise that life will be free from conflict or hardship when we follow Him; in fact, He says we will likely face even more difficulties. The difference is in how we respond.

God does promise to help carry our burdens, comfort our souls and show us a way out through the dark times. Psalm 23 is one the most reassuring passages in the Bible about going

through hard times. As you read, consider the following questions: (1) What is the analogy that is used in this passage? Who is God? Who are we? (2) What comfort does this passage provide?

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

dig

1. What does the shepherd do for his sheep in this passage?

2. How can the image of Jesus as the loving Shepherd comfort you when you are having a difficult time?

3. What is a “valley of the shadow of death”?

4. Describe the last time you felt like you were walking through the valley of the shadow of death. Did you rely on God during this dark time? If so, how? If not, why not?

5. Do you think it’s important to rely on God for help in your dark times, or should you first try to get through it on your own?

6. What happens if a sheep tries to confront danger on its own without the shepherd?

7. Has your family gone through a dark time? How did the family handle it?

8. Have you experienced a time when you have felt God's loving presence or comfort? Describe it here.

apply

Home is not always a happy place. The odds are great that either you or a close friend has experienced family hardship. Millions of people suffer in silence. But Scripture is clear that even in the most difficult situations there is hope, help and healing from God.

Working through hardship takes a huge dose of time, effort, forgiveness and Jesus. And let's be clear here—Jesus does not promise to take away our difficulty. Sometimes He does (and there is no shame in pleading with God to do so), but oftentimes the hardship remains. Why?

In 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul writes about a thorn in his flesh that God had not removed despite Paul's requests. However, even though God had not removed this thorn from his life, Paul was able to write, "[God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ's power may rest on me. . . . For when I am weak, then I am strong" (vv. 9-10).

1. Why do you think that Paul was able to "boast" about his hardship?

2. Have you ever seen God create good out of a bad situation? If so, how did He accomplish this in your life?

3. Hardships and trials are a part of life and, at some point, will impact your family. Yet there are some steps you can take for working through these trials. The first is to realize that *some hardships are caused while others just happen*. If the suffering you are experiencing has been caused by your own sin, you need to deal with that through prayer and confession. What promise does 1 John 1:9 give about asking God for forgiveness?

4. If you are suffering because of the sin of others, you will need to ask God to help you deal with the consequences of that sin. In doing so, it is important to *offer forgiveness*. Forgiveness can be an incredibly hard task, but a necessary one if progress is to be made. Sometimes this means forgiving someone who has wronged you, while at other times, it may mean forgiving yourself. Why is forgiveness important in trying to work through hard times?

5. Read Colossians 3:12-14. What traits are we to embody in dealing with others, even in times of hardship?

6. What areas of your life do you tend to blame yourself for causing hardship, when in actuality it's not all your fault?

7. There are other times when the crisis may not be the direct result of sin but simply due to the circumstances of being human in an imperfect world, such as a serious illness or an accident. In these instances, God has promised us that He will help us through the difficult times. Read Jeremiah 29:11. What comfort can this verse give us about the trials we face?

8. Bad things happen, even to good families. What promise does Philippians 4:13 offer us in the midst of trials and hardship?

9. Proverbs 15:22 states, “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” The next step in working through trials is to *seek help*. Of course, this is not always easy to do. Why might someone with a traumatic home situation not want to talk with anyone or ask for help?

10. Why is it so important and healthy to seek help rather than suffer in silence?

11. When experiencing trials, it is important to *hold on to hope*. Thousands of kids face family crises every year. Undoubtedly, these trials can leave their mark, but many make it out of their traumatic home situations and live very productive lives. Read Deuteronomy 31:8. What is the hope found in this verse?

12. Finally, it is important to remember that *God cares about what you are going through*. He really does! When crises come, it's easy to blame God and experience struggles in your relationship with Him. Yet God wants to walk *with you* through your valley of hurt and disappointment. God weeps with you in your tragedy. He loves you and wants to heal your wounds. Read John 11:32-44. What is happening in this passage?

13. Jesus knew that He would raise Lazarus from the dead, but He wept anyway (v. 35). Why?

One of the great truths is that we have a God who sheds tears when someone is in pain. The fact that Christ wept at the death of a friend should encourage you that He surely cares for those with pain in their lives. So today, give Him your pain and your sorrows. He has promised, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

reflect

1. How does your family deal with trials and hardship?

2. What traumatic situations require the help of a professional counselor?

3. How can you help a friend who is experiencing a family hardship?

4. Do hard times weaken or strengthen your relationship with Jesus? Why?

6. Why is it important to know the promises of God—especially when going through hardship?

7. When did Jesus face hardship in His life? How did He deal with it?

8. Why do we face hardship and trouble in our lives?

meditation



"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart!
I have overcome the world."

JOHN 16:33