



Hope for Tomorrow: Big Picture | April 29, 2020

Discussion Guide

The Scoop

Psychologists have studied hope for a long time. One thing that seems to be true is that suffering is actually a reliable precursor for experiencing great hope.

Key Verses

Romans 5:3-4 (NLV)

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation."

Discussion

The reality is that we all face adversity in some way or another. Unfortunately, some of us may endure hardships that seem way more difficult and even unfathomable to others. Wishing for something else is mostly fruitless. The important shift starts with owning your reality and carrying that reality into something beyond your current suffering. To be clear, this is not an attempt to push difficulty, pain, or suffering aside. It is not simply a "try harder" or "move on" conversation. This is difficult; Pain is real and should not be ignored or bottled. The following is a well documented process for productively navigating these very real and difficult circumstances.

1. When you look at the lives of others, what are some difficult things you know people are dealing with that seem unfathomable? (in group settings...please be mindful of privacy and anonymity here)
2. What are some hardships or dark times that you have experienced or walked through with a close friend or family member?

What if we were able to view darkness through a different lens? Psychologists have determined that one of the strongest markers of hope is overcoming something difficult. Many communicate this with the analogy that we cannot truly appreciate light without experiencing darkness. In the darkness, we can typically see nothing but darkness. However, developing a picture in our mind of the light can help guide us out of darkness. Viktor Frankl, a concentration camp survivor and psychologist, developed a concept called "redemptive suffering." Essentially, he asks how we can give the darkness meaning as we head toward the light. Instead of staying in the darkness or ignoring and trying to forget the darkness, he suggests we assign it meaning beyond the moments of darkness. He invites us to see a bigger purpose.

3. Can you think of any examples of friends or family who have overcome painful events in their life? Use the darkness and light analogy to illustrate these real-life redemptive suffering examples.
4. Do you have any examples of a time you were able to redeem suffering? Or are there any current things that you are struggling with that the dark/light concept could help you move forward, albeit slowly.

The best part of all this is that it's biblical! The bible never promises a life without adversity. However in Romans 5:3-4. it acknowledges suffering, provides a bigger picture with which to anchor our lives, and presents a case for strength in overcoming. Hardships can help us become more aware, more empathetic, more resilient, and better able to handle more difficulty.

5. How does attaching pain and suffering to your faith help you process it? How has attaching it to faith hurt the process in your life or the life of others?
6. How might apply this concept to impact the lives of people around you? How might your story of struggle provide you with a unique perspective in order to help others?

What's Next?

Whatever you are dealing with and struggling with, realize that God is bigger than the hardships you are experiencing. This week in your life, examine the darkness. Spend some time there, but don't stay there. Without darkness we cannot have light. As you move forward, look for the places where you can be the light in the world.

You can find a template of our 5-minute faith journal at faithinfive.com to further engage your goals and connect them with your faith.