



TRAGEDY &
Triumph

KINGDOM
CONVERSATIONS
FOR REAL LIFE

TRAGEDY & *Triumph*

KINGDOM CONVERSATIONS FOR REAL LIFE

A Community Groups Study
of Crossline Community Church

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Prologue

It seemed as though, for that brief moment, everything was still. Though I could feel the fierce wind on my face and see the waves crashing over the bow of the boat, my soul was at rest as I listened to the words of this prisoner. We had been in that storm for fourteen days. I didn't know what was worse, the pangs of hunger or the constant spreading infection of distress. With all of our eyes fixed upon him, he broke bread and lifted up a prayer of thanksgiving to his God. As I pushed that soggy bread into my eager mouth, I couldn't escape the thought. It was the thought that I know many of us had: What did this man have that gave him such peace? Such confidence? He'd been arrested for being a religious fanatic and had told us that some sort of angel had been with him. I began to think that he wasn't that crazy, after all.

That is where it all started. After I survived the crash on that island, I placed my faith in his God. It was on the sands of that beach that I learned about Jesus, the Christ. It was there that I learned what, or rather who, gave Paul that peace on the boat in the midst of the storm. I've faced many other storms since that day. I face the threat of persecution every day, and yet I am free! I am victorious! I am no longer a slave to fear and shame. I am now a citizen of a greater Kingdom than the kingdoms of this world, because I serve a King who has overcome the world. You may think I'm crazy, but I thought that once about a man on a boat. That boat is at the bottom of the sea, but that man has been lifted up to heaven.

When I am united with him, once again, I know exactly what I will tell him: "You were right. The troubles of the world are nothing compared to this place!"

How to the Most Out of this Study

Welcome to the exciting adventure of studying the Bible! In *Tragedy and Triumph: Kingdom Conversations for Real Life*, you will be diving into 2 Corinthians chapters 1-5 as a group to uncover the truths about the greater triumphal reality found through Jesus. The apostle Paul knew all about challenges and trials. His challenges may not be the same as ours, but the Spirit-inspired words he writes to the believers at Corinth are still just as important for us to hear today, in our own circumstances.

To make the most of this study, here are some important suggestions:

1. The best way to get the most out of this study is to ENGAGE. Come to your community group ready to listen and share. If you are distracted, closed off or too busy to make attendance a priority, we can guarantee you that this experience won't be as rich for you as it could be.
2. Consider being disciplined to follow the weekly plan as outline in the following section for the next five weeks of this study. Every exercise is designed to enhance your weekly discussions and spur on your learnings about God. You are likely to connect with these exercises in ways that are different from the group discussions.
3. Come as you are, wherever you are with your faith journey, and don't let this study burden you! This workbook is designed to be a refreshing, thought-provoking, easy-to-use aid for discussion and study. All the Scripture references are already in the workbook, though you can utilize your own Bible as well.

Suggested Weekly Plan

Rhythms and routines are essential to the practice of spiritual disciplines. There certainly is a place for spontaneity in the life of the disciple, but if you want to make a spiritual practice normal and natural, it almost always requires intention followed by repetition. Whether you have a weekly rhythm already established or not, this workbook will provide you with content to help guide you through some daily practices over five weeks. You will find the content inset into each session on the pages after the discussion section. This content is not meant to replace a daily reading of scripture, but can supplement your reading with practices that will add to the learnings of each session and potentially introduce you to new spiritual disciplines. Below is a description of what is provided each week:

Memory Monday: A simple memory verse and a guide to help you reflect on a time when God was faithful.

Testimony Tuesday: We have a written testimony each week for you to read that highlights key themes from the study.

Worship Wednesday: Listen to a worship song, reflect on the provided lyrics.

Thanksgiving Thursday: Take this day to offer up prayer of praise and thanksgiving. As you step into this time, you can consider the ways that you have been provided for, personally, like the job that you have, the people in your life that bring encouragement, your health, or even the small group you are part of. You can also thank God for who He is and how He has loved us. Each week, there will be a suggested praise and thanksgiving emphasis that will help guide you during your time of prayer.

Fasting Friday: Fasting is a spiritual discipline that can help focus our hearts and minds on reliant prayer. We deny to rely. After 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, Jesus, when tempted, quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, saying, "Man shall not live

on bread alone, but on every word from the mouth of God.” When we fast, we exercise listening for the word of the Lord. On Fridays throughout this series, lean into the opportunity to fast and pray. Fasting can be from one meal or all meals throughout the day. It can also be something else that you are fasting from, like social media, TV or caffeine. Every time you feel that urge for what you are fasting from, take a moment to pray for something that you are seeking the Lord’s wisdom, strength or miraculous intervention for.

Ingredients for a Great Group

Whether you have been a part of a group like this before or not, please take a look at the following guidelines to help your group function to its greatest possible potential.

- **Don't Miss it!** This first tip is a big one! As a community group, commit to never missing a gathering. And be on time! If you are going to miss or be late, let your host/group know as soon as you can.
- **Assign a timekeeper!** Within the group, someone appreciates organization and timeliness—assign this person to be the timekeeper for group time together. Permit this person to move things along to make sure everything gets done and the group ends on time.
- **Keep it Confidential!** One of the beautiful things about Community Groups is the deep, meaningful conversation that happens. This often means people share sensitive things – please keep it confidential.
- **R-E-S-P-E-C-T!** Your group comprises all sorts of people from different backgrounds—it's one of the great features of your group! As a group, commit to making your group a safe environment with mutual respect. Respect not only your fellow group members and your host but also the home in which you are meeting.
- **Have Fun!** Don't forget to have fun! Laugh! Play games! You can even set aside specific time or additional gatherings to just have fun together.
- **Eat Up!** Food always provides a sense of comfort and unity in group settings, so whether it's a full meal, snacks, dessert, or coffee—eat up!

- **Take Turns!** Many groups find ways for members to take turns on things such as providing food, leading prayer requests, texting reminders, or opening their home for the group. It's always healthy to not have one person in charge of something every time. (You can even assign a group member to coordinate this.)
- **Find your groove!** No two community groups are the same, and that's okay! As a group, find your groove on how you do things and stick with it.
- **Don't let kids control!** If you are a group with kids, make group time a priority. It's easy to become overwhelmed with kids and their schedules and babysitters, but don't let that control your involvement. As a group, figure out the best scenario for childcare early on so that you can fully participate in the group(e.g. individual babysitters, group babysitter(s), putting on a movie in the back room, etc.)

TIME TO Dive In

These 5 weeks are not only designed for learning more about who God is, but to also dive into community, an essential need of humankind. When the weight of the world comes down upon us, it is a community--one that deeply knows and loves us--that enables us to stand. Consider the wise words of King Solomon,

*“Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:
If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up
Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?
Though one may be overpowered,
Two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”
(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)*

Whether you are stumbling over poor habits, struggling with destructive thinking, or being spiritually attacked, there is security in belonging to a community that is for you. With that in mind, we strongly urge you to take ownership in making space for true community. This is not something that leaders or hosts are solely responsible for; this is the conviction that must be woven into every person participating in this study. This means compassionately taking responsibility to walk alongside those you meet that are looking for a group and inviting them to the table. This means that groups must be open to receiving newcomers. This means that new hosts and leaders must rise up from existing groups that get too large. This means that we need to be sacrificially thinking of the needs of others above our own needs. When we do this, everyone can receive a blessing.

Foreword

Welcome to Tragedy and Triumph: Kingdom Conversations for Real Life, a 5-session small groups curriculum from Crossline Community Church. Although you can do this curriculum individually, it is best in the context of a small group of people. We pray that this content will bless you and assist you in your process of discipleship.

Throughout the five sessions of this study, you will be having Kingdom conversations with your group about God's comfort, living in view of eternity, being a participant in the ministry of reconciliation, and so much more! Perhaps to a greater degree than any of our other previous studies, this study has been created intentionally with the discussions that you will have with your group in mind. The emotions and internal wrestling that comes as a result of tragedy and life's afflictions is something that we have all experienced and can connect to. In 2 Corinthians, when Paul shares from his heart about these same emotions, we can understand his feelings in light of our own circumstances. So, when he then speaks about the greater reality of the victory found in Jesus, it invites us to likewise see things from that perspective. The dialogue that you get to have with your fellow group members in this study will be invaluable. Together, you will seek to discover how the darkness of your tragedies can be swallowed up by the light of God's triumph.

In addition to the written content in this workbook, videos accompany each session and can be accessed through the RightNow Media platform (see page 79) or by going to crosslinechurch.com/TragedyandTriumph



SESSION *One*

TRIUMPH OF GOD'S COMFORT

INTRODUCTION

For something so common and regularly observed in humans, there is surprisingly still a lot of research to be done around the science of the emotional tears we cry. Over the centuries, theories for why we cry range from feeling that they were the oozing of the body's vital organs as a stress response, all the way to the idea that they were the result of the emotion of love heating the heart, which generated water vapor inside of us. More recent science obviously is far more advanced in its understanding, but the more profound thought for us to ponder is the fact that God created humans, and only humans, with the ability to cry. Furthermore, He did so even before sadness and grief were in the world. So, even though Charles Darwin once called emotional tears "purposeless", God would say otherwise. In fact, it's our image-of-God nature that makes us feel things emotionally. God says through the prophet Jeremiah that he will "weep and wail...and take up a lament." (Jer. 9:10). The prophet Isaiah stated that Messiah—Jesus, the Son of God— was "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief." (Is. 53:3). Jesus wept sympathetically with Mary and Martha over the death of their brother and his friend, Lazarus (John 11:35). God is intimately and compassionately aware of our tears.

2 Corinthians is a letter that opens up with the author, the Apostle Paul, pouring out his heart to the church in Corinth, explaining the juxtaposition of the suffering and the comfort that he has been experiencing in his soul. He had been beaten, slandered, and insulted. He had mourned and wrestled. In Corinth, false teachers were trying to turn people against him. Yet, his response is praise. Praise to the "Father of compassion and the God of all comfort." (2 Cor. 1:3) He asserts, in these first 14 verses, a truth that is foundationally the theme of the five sessions of this study: That the world is full of tragedies and hardships, but those that follow Jesus can experience the truer, forever triumph and comfort of the Kingdom of Heaven.

One day, Jesus will return and he will wipe away every tear and bring an end to death, mourning, crying and pain (Rev. 21:4), but until that day, believers, like Paul, are left to cling to that greater reality in a world of challenge.

So tears will be shed. As a result of the heartbreaks we face in this world--yes, but from those same tear ducts can also come tears of joy and overwhelming gratitude for the presence of the victorious Savior. The Bible may say that every tear will be wiped away, but if God made us to cry and His creation was "very good", I can imagine my eyes filling up with tears when I see my Lord face to face and He welcomes me home. Tears in heaven may or may not be a real thing, but one thing we can know is real is the comfort that God provides in a broken world.

VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, watch the video for Session 1

Learn How on Page 79

After Watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

READ

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the church of God in Corinth, together with all his holy people throughout Achaia:

² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. ⁶ If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

⁸ We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, ¹¹ as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul describes the Christian experience as being 1. This passage is all about “troubles” and “comfort”. How would you explain what “comfort” is? What are some examples of common troubles that people everywhere experience? How do troubles affect us?
2. What life lessons have you learned from the troubles you have endured? Have you ever shared what you have learned with someone else facing similar circumstances? How did God use you to share comfort?
3. Paul, arguably the greatest Christian of all time, experienced trouble (vv. 8-9). What do you think it means that Paul was “burdened beyond [his] ability to endure”? Have you ever felt that way?
4. When we feel troubled and burdened, we can obstruct the flow of God’s comfort by relying on ourselves rather than receiving the help of God and others. What keeps people from turning to God in life’s toughest times?

5. According to verses 3-5, God is the compassionate comforter to those in trouble. How do you think God comforts us in our troubles? How can we learn to rely on God and receive His comfort and sustaining power?

TAKEAWAY:

What does God want you to personally hear from this passage?

What action does this passage prompt you to take?

SESSION ONE - WEEKLY PLAN

■ Memory Monday

2 Corinthians 1:9

Indeed, we felt we had received

the sentence of death.

But this happened

that we might not rely on ourselves

but on God, who raises the dead.

After taking time to memorize this verse, think about a time in your life where you felt that you had received “a sentence of death” (e.g. a time where you were at the end of your rope or depleted of hope). How did that time teach you to rely on God? Or if it didn’t teach you, how could it teach you now as you reflect on it?

■ Testimony Tuesday - Beth

In May of 2007, two months after our marriage, David and I discovered we were pregnant with our first baby. Terrified, but overjoyed, we prepared to walk into the new journey that parenthood would be. Two months later, we lost that baby. That unexpected loss was the beginning of our infertility journey. In the several years following, we lost 3 more babies in the early stages of pregnancy. We were in the Air Force at the time, stationed in Hawaii and we just ‘so happened’ to be put at one of the two bases in the world that offer an extensive infertility program at their hospital--100% all covered by the military. Throughout our time there, we went through test after test, loss after

loss. No answers. We received an unofficial diagnosis of never being able to carry a baby to full term. We were devastated. So many questions for God. So much heartache, such emptiness.

Until finally- one doctor thought they had discovered the problem! Through a miracle of God and the treatment the doctor recommended, we were finally able to bring a beautiful baby girl into the world. I can't explain the healing, the joy, and the relief that she brought to our hearts. Over the next 6 years, we were able to bring 2 more baby girls into our family, using the same treatment. We thought we had learned the fix for what was causing our losses.

Several years later, surprise! Another baby on the way. We used the same treatment, baby was growing and thriving. At nearly 14 weeks, we went for an ultrasound to discover the gender. But instead of hearing the words, 'it's a boy' or 'it's a girl' we heard the words, 'your baby has no heartbeat.' The year that followed that loss (a baby boy) felt impossible. Grieving a child while parenting my other children was one of the hardest things I've ever done. I felt so betrayed by God and so angry at Him, that I just stopped talking to Him. I couldn't understand why He would allow us to lose another child.

But God...He was so patient with me. So loving and kind. I finally got to the point where I knew something had to change. I either needed to walk away from everything that the Bible says about God or believe all of it, even though I didn't feel it. Over and over the Bible says how good and loving and kind God is. I knew better than to dismiss all of what I knew of God just because I didn't feel it in that season. I decided to faith it until I felt it. Jesus met me in such a real way in that season. Once I broke my stubborn wall down, he came in and filled all the empty spaces, and mended the broken pieces of my heart. And to top that off, less than two years later, God surprised us another miracle- our son.

I wish I could say that was the end of our infertility journey, but it wasn't. When our son was 2- another surprise! Baby number 5 was on the way. At our 8-week ultrasound, the doctor told us the baby had stopped growing, and had no heartbeat. I couldn't believe it. My body gave no symptoms of a miscarriage, and I carried the baby for two more weeks. But the baby didn't make it. We experienced a very traumatic 6th miscarriage. I spiraled. Fell into the deepest pit of grief that turned into severe depression. I couldn't eat and couldn't sleep. I could hardly function. I'm not exaggerating when I say I thought I was dying of heartbreak. I didn't want to die, but I knew I couldn't live that way. All I could do was make sure my kids were ok, cry, journal, and worship. I clung to so many different worship songs. I begged Jesus to heal me. I heard Him say "the only way out is through." That's not what I wanted to hear.

Yet, it was true. The only way out WAS through. But I didn't do it without God. He stepped between me and Jesus, looked at me and said, "I got this one." He proceeded to slowly and gently pull me out of that pit. To show me love as a Father I never before had felt from Him. He was so patient with my process.

There is no pretty bow to tie up on a journey of grief and loss. There just isn't. But, there is God. Our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He is always with us, guiding us through it, and giving us peace that passes understanding.

He comforts us so that we can comfort others. I have since walked with other mamas through this type of loss in a way I would never have been able to before. Allowing God to show me that sometimes, all someone needs is silence, prayers, hugs, someone to cry with or all of the above. I don't have all the answers, but I do have my Jesus and He is enough. He is what gets us through.

Worship Wednesday

Take a moment today to slow down and prayerfully reflect on the lyrics below and listen to the song at crosslinechurch.com/triumphanttragedy!

Today's Song: "Highlands (Song of Ascent)"

By Benjamin William Hastings and Joel Houston, lyrics © Hillsong Music Publishing Australia

Verse 1

Oh, how high would I climb mountains
If the mountains were where You hide
Oh, how far I'd scale the valleys
If You graced the other side

Verse 2

Oh, how long have I chased rivers
From lowly seas to where they rise
Against the rush of grace descending
From the source of its supply

Pre-Chorus 1

'Cause in the highlands and the heartache
You're neither more nor less inclined
I would search and stop at nothing
You're just not that hard to find

Chorus

I will praise on the mountain
And I will praise you when the mountain is in my way
You're the summit where my feet are
So I will praise You in the valleys all the same
No less God within the shadows
No less faithful when the night leads me astray
'Cause You're the heaven where my heart is
In the highlands and the heartache all the same

Verse 3

Oh, how far beneath Your glory
Does Your kindness extent apart
From where Your feet rest on the sunrise
To where You sweep the sinner's past?

Verse 4

And oh, how fast would You come running?
If just to shadow me through the night
Trace my steps through all my failure
And walk me out the other side

Pre-Chorus 2

For who could dare ascend that mountain
That valleyed hill called Calvary
But for the one I call Good Shepherd
Who like a lamb was slain for me

[Chorus]

Bridge

Whatever I walk through, wherever I am
Your name can move mountains wherever I stand
And if ever I walk through the valley of death
I'll sing through the shadows my song of ascent (2x)

Pre-Chorus 3

From the gravest of all valleys
Come the pasture we call grace
A mighty river flowing upward
From a deep but empty grave

[Chorus]

■ **Thanksgiving Thursday**

This week, take Thursday to offer up prayers of praise and thanksgiving, emphasizing God as the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.

Suggested topics:

- How God has helped you/is helping you through tough times
- The Lord's forgiveness
- God's faithfulness to never leave you, nor forsake you.
- Thanking God for how He see you and knows you, even in hard times.

■ **Fasting Friday**

What I will fast from today:

What I will be specifically praying about today:

NOTES // PRAYER REQUESTS

The background is a stylized illustration of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, a river flows through a valley with brownish-yellow grass. In the middle ground, a blue lake is nestled between mountains. The background features blue and grey mountains under a brown sky with white clouds. The text is overlaid on this scene.

SESSION Two

TRIUMPH IN THE NEW COVENANT

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard it said that success is less about what you know and more about who you know? Yeah, me too—which is why I think I choose late night racquetball with friends over finishing papers in college. At least, that’s probably what I told myself back then. Now, where as I certainly wouldn’t recommend going all-in on this way of thinking, there is, in reality, a lot of credibility to that statement. If you think about it, are you more likely to get that job due to your killer resume or the personal endorsement of the CEO? Or if you are tasked with raising money, polished marketing and well-constructed processes can’t compete with going and personally asking the people in your network of relationships. On the flipside, we can also understand how this can be frustrating and defeating. I had a friend who was an extremely talented composer, who graduated top of his class and had a dream of creating epic film scores. After ten exhausting years of trying to break into Hollywood, bump shoulders with the right people, and watching less-qualified composers get the big jobs, he abandoned the dream and went into a totally different field.

When Paul talks about the “New Covenant”, it’s less about what you know, and more about who you know. The Old Covenant, with its laws and guidelines for living, had value to a nation who were meant to be set apart for God, but it was constricting and based on adherence to those laws and guidelines. When trying to live this way, we can become prisoners to performance—tortured by the anxiety of failing or by the lack of fulfillment when we achieve a level of discipline above the rest. Paul, in one of his earliest letters wrote that, “It was for freedom that Christ has set us free,” (Gal. 5:1) and as we step into this next session, we get to explore the true triumph that we can find in this freedom.

If you feel like you are messing up all the time or are weary from trying to hold up an image of perfection, Paul's message in this section of scripture holds out great hope. My friend, though he is happy now, may not have had things turn out how he would have planned, but I still hope that one day he may meet a "who" that will bring to life all the "what" he knows. I pray this same prayer for those around me who have yet to meet Jesus.

VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, watch the video for Session 2

Learn How on Page 79

After Watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

READ

2 Corinthians 2:14-3:18

But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵ For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? ¹⁷ Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? ² You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. ³ You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁴ Such confidence we have through Christ before God. ⁵ Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹ If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! ¹⁰ For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. ¹¹ And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory

of that which lasts!

¹² Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul describes the Christian experience as being a “captive in Christ’s triumphal procession.” (2:14). What comes to mind when you think of a “triumphal procession”? What do you think it means to be one of His captives?
2. What contrasts does Paul make between the Old Covenant of the “letter” and the New Covenant of the “Spirit” in this section of scripture?
3. According to 3:12-17, because we have turned to Christ, we are in the New Covenant and have been given freedom by the Spirit. What do think this means? What are we set free from?
4. By the work of the Holy Spirit, we are transformed to live in the freedom of the New Covenant. What does this look like to the watching world?

5. Are there any areas of your life that you still keep veiled or hidden away from Jesus' transforming and triumphant presence?

6. What daily decisions and habits will help you, "contemplate the Lord's glory" (3:18)?

TAKEAWAY:

What does God want you to personally hear from this passage?

What action does this passage prompt you to take?

SESSION TWO - WEEKLY PLAN

Memory Monday

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is the Spirit

and where the Spirit of the Lord is,

But this happened

there is freedom.

After memorizing this short but profoundly powerful verse, what has/could Christ set you free from by His presence in your life?

Testimony Tuesday - Rahnee

It's 1:00am. The phone rings and I'm awoken with a lady on the other end saying, "This is the chaplain from Mission Hospital..." Say no more, I ran to my son's room to find an empty bed! She goes on to say that my son, Cruz, had been in a car accident and had been taken to the Hospital. She told me to get there immediately.

Suddenly my heart drops, my mind races in a panic as I take off to the hospital. As I arrive, I'm taken to a tiny little room to find Cruz has been hit head on by a drunk driver who died on impact and left Cruz suffering multiple life-threatening injuries.

At that point, there was nothing humanly possible I could do. As a mom, I felt helpless, hopeless, lost and broken. I did not know what to do and how this was going to turn out. Although, what I did know to do was PRAY! But what

do I pray?! What do I say? How is God going to turn this around? Those were all the first thoughts that came to my mind before I could get a word out. At that moment I was still at a loss for words. However, God had prepared me for this exact moment with the work that He had been doing through me over that past year. I clearly heard Him say to me, "Rahnee, look to the Lord. Where does your help come from? It comes from the Lord. I got you. I am here with you and I will meet all your needs. I hear your anxious thoughts and I know what you need." Wow. Like a wave, peace came over me like I've never felt before. It was like God took the lead and He was in control. Every day we had our troubles as we spent 3 months in the intensive care unit of CHOC Children's Hospital. Cruz underwent 17 surgeries. However, no matter what, every day I was able to turn to God and say thank You. Thank You, Lord, for intervening and making a way where there was no way! There was never a day that went by that a road block didn't occur, but in every road block, God made a way.

During this time, I've never in my life seen so many teenagers, family, friends, and members of our community drop to their knees in prayer, lifting me up daily and not letting me go. Best way to describe how I felt was like I was floating on a cloud of prayers. This allowed me to trust God's grace in every situation with the mindset of "God has given me everything I need for the season I'm in." Instead of getting paralyzed by this situation, I was able to get energized by the support I had. What looked like a disability, I saw God's ability to turn things around and He did. Cruz is now a walking miracle and I know God has big plans for him.

Worship Wednesday

Take a moment today to slow down and prayerfully reflect on the lyrics below and listen to the song at crosslinechurch.com/triumphandtragedy!

Today's Song: "Firm Foundation (He Won't)"

By Cody Carnes, Austin Davis, and Chandler Moore, lyrics
© Capitol CMG Publishing

Chorus

Christ is my firm foundation
The Rock on which I stand
When everything around me is shaken
I've never been more glad
That I put my faith in Jesus
'Cause He's never let me down
He's faithful through generations
So why would He fail now
He won't He won't

Verse

I've still got joy in chaos
I've got peace
That makes no sense
So I won't be going under
I'm not held
By my own strength
'Cause I've built my life on Jesus
He's never let me down
He's faithful in every season
So why would He fail now

Refrain

He won't He won't
He won't fail
He won't fail

[Chorus]

[Refrain]

Bridge

Rain came and wind blew
But my house was built on You
I'm safe with You
I'm going to make it through

Tag

I'm going to make it through
'Cause I'm standing strong on You

Tag

I'm going to make it through
'Cause my house
Is built on You

[Chorus]

■ Thanksgiving Thursday

This week, take Thursday to offer up prayers of praise and thanksgiving, emphasizing **how God has set you free to sin to live in His righteousness!**

Suggested topics:


- How God has changed your life
- How you are no longer a slave to sin due to the work of Christ
- You are not an object of condemnation
- You have the opportunity to reflect his glory!

■ Fasting Friday

What I will fast from today:

What I will be specifically praying about today:

NOTES // PRAYER REQUESTS



SESSION
Three

TRIUMPH OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

INTRODUCTION

If you have had the chance to see Marvel's Captain America: The First Avenger, it's impossible to not love Steve Rodgers, who becomes Captain America. However, its Rodgers, before he is Captain America that I am talking about here. Though small and scrawny, he has an unbreakable spirit within him--one that doesn't back down. It's early in the movie where he is getting pummeled by a guy much bigger than him, but he keeps getting back up, to which the assailant says, "You just don't know when to give up, do you?" and Rodgers replies with the iconic line, "I can do this all day."

We all know, in one way or another, what it's like to get pummeled. Perhaps not with fists, but by the swings of life in this broken world. It could be the right hook of a cancer diagnosis or a punch to the gut in the form of spiteful actions from someone close to you. It could be the jab of a disrespectful child, an uppercut of a job layoff or the headlock of an environment hostile to your faith. Sometimes in those moments, we wish Jesus could just swoop in from heaven and fix it. If He can heal leprosy, multiply loaves and fishes, and calm storms, surely He can come and help me with what's going on with me? Yes, He could do that, and in moments, He still does, but there is a greater promise that Jesus came to give us rather than a promise to "fix our problems." It is the promise of the Spirit of resurrection. As much as the world tries to rob our joy and hope and strength, it cannot be destroyed because it is sustained by Jesus who overcame the world. It is in this that we triumph.

Later on in the movie, Rodgers is getting beat up again. However, this time he has been injected with the super soldier serum, and is now Captain America. Literally filled with new physical power that matched his mental fortitude, he looks up with a smirk and delivers the line: "I can do this all day."

VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, watch the video for Session 2

Learn How on Page 79

After Watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

READ

2 Corinthians 4:6-15

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰ We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹ For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. ¹² So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

¹³ It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴ because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. ¹⁵ All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

Isaiah 40:29-31

*He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.*

*³⁰ Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;*

*³¹ but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.*

*They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to 2 Corinthians 4:7, believers have a “treasure in jars of clay.” What do you think Paul means by “treasure” and “jars of clay”?
2. In 4:8-11, Paul explains that resurrection life comes out of death. How do you understand the concept of carrying around in our bodies the death of Jesus? Why is that important in relation to experiencing and revealing the life of Jesus? (v.10-11)
3. How can reflecting on Jesus’ resurrection, and our future resurrection with Him, bring us hope and perseverance in times of testing?
4. Verse 15 tells us that the proclamation of our faith in the resurrection ultimately brings glory to God. What keeps you from being more vocal with others about your faith? How can you grow in confidence and conviction to share your story of faith?

5. What evidence can you see in your own life, whether presently or in the past, of Jesus' resurrection power alive in you? (How has God produced His life in you in seasons of "death"?) What does this teach you about the Kingdom?

TAKEAWAY:

What does God want you to personally hear from this passage?

What action does this passage prompt you to take?

SESSION THREE - WEEKLY PLAN

Memory Monday

2 Corinthians 4:7-9

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay
to show that this all-surpassing power
is from God and not from us.*

*We are hard pressed on every side, but not
crushed;*

perplexed, but not in despair;

persecuted, but not abandoned;

struck down, but not destroyed.

Today's memory verse is a mini pep-talk straight from scripture for when things get tough! Can you remember someone from your life that offered really timely encouragement at a time that you needed it?

Testimony Tuesday - Nathan

I woke up at 2 am with my stomach in knots and a piercing pain that felt like I was being stabbed with a fiery hot knife repeatedly. This was the Monday night after a Men's Retreat in 2021. We got to the ER and I was poked and prodded and finally had a CT scan. The cause for why I went into the ER was an acute bout of colitis, but the scan

showed a large mass on my pancreas, which after biopsy was malignant.

This news obviously devastated my wife Jax and myself. Tears were shed and the grief was palpable, but we both had a strong faith in Jesus, and by putting our faith in him completely, we were given a peace that can only be given by our Creator. We got through 12 rounds of the most intense chemo you can get, Whipple surgery, and radiation. The Whipple surgery eliminated $\frac{3}{4}$ of my pancreas, all of my gall bladder, and $\frac{1}{3}$ of my stomach, which had to be reattached to my small intestine. Through all this I was able to play a lot of pickleball and keep a business running. I get chills of joy thinking about how God carried us so gently and powerfully. He did it from all angles, but the primary was the church body and pastors at Crossline Church, that prayed and supported us. I was privileged to go through all of the men's discipleship offerings, which brought me even closer to Christ through this all!

It has been 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years since the diagnosis and God has kept me around 3 years longer than they gave me when I was initially diagnosed. At the moment of me writing this, the cancer has advanced and I have been put on Hospice. This is not the outcome Jax or I wanted. We both know God is on the throne and will make the ultimate decision as to how many days I have left here on earth. I wake up every day on borrowed time and through the tears, have remained grateful to God for giving them to us. My mission now is to plant as many seeds for Jesus as possible before he takes me to heaven. I am His servant. May He be glorified through my life.

Worship Wednesday

Take a moment today to slow down and prayerfully reflect on the lyrics below and listen to the song at crosslinechurch.com/triumphandtragedy!

Today's Song: "Highs & Lows"

By Aodhan King, Ben Tan and Joel Houston, lyrics
© Capitol CMG Publishing

Verse 1

When it feels like the dark
Lingers longer than the night
When the shadows feel like giants
Are You chasing me down

Verse 2

Tell me where could I run
From Your light
Where could I hide
Hemmed within Your precious thoughts
There's no hiding from Your love

Chorus 1

Highs and lows
Lord You're with me either way it goes
Should I rise or should I fall
Even so
Lord Your mercy is an even flow
You're too good to let me go

Verse 3

Should I dance on the heights
Or make my bed among the depths
Your mercy waits at every end
Like You planned it from the start

Verse 4

Should the dawn come with wings
Or find me far-side of the sea
There Your hand still fastens me
Ever closer to Your heart

Chorus 2

Highs and lows
Lord You're with me either way it goes
Should I rise or should I fall
Even so
Lord Your mercy is an even flow
Should I rise or should I fall
You are faithful through it all
You're too good to let me go

Chorus 3

Highs and lows
You surround me either way it goes
Should I rise or should I fall
Lord You're with me through it all
Highs and lows
In the rhythms of Your grace I know
Should I rise or should I fall
You are faithful through it all
And You're too good to let me go

■ Thanksgiving Thursday

This week, take Thursday to offer up prayers of praise and thanksgiving, emphasizing **God's power to overcome the world and faithfulness to sustain us through tough challenges.**

Suggested topics:

- God is a miracle-working God
- Thank God for the victories that you have seen in your life
- God's power over all the things of this world
- Thanks God for the ways He continues to provide for you

■ Fasting Friday

What I will fast from today:

What I will be specifically praying about today:

NOTES // PRAYER REQUESTS

The background is a stylized illustration. At the bottom, a wooden boardwalk with railings leads from the foreground towards the center. The boardwalk is made of brown planks and is flanked by blue and brown brushstrokes representing grass and bushes. In the middle ground, there are blue and brown mountains. In the background, a large, jagged mountain peak is visible against a brown sky. On the left and right sides, there are trees with brown leaves. The overall style is a mix of flat colors and expressive brushstrokes.

SESSION Four

TRIUMPH IN AN ETERNAL INHERITANCE

INTRODUCTION

We were all sitting around the campfire, under the stars, cracking jokes and reflecting on the fun weekend of adventuring that we had just had. That's when a sudden, loud and violent gust of wind whipped through our camp. It blew hats off and caused the fire to tremble. We all went dead silent and stared at each other, wide-eyed. "What was that?!" We were all perplexed, but not alarmed in that moment, because it was only a quick singular gust. At least, that is what we thought.

Whether you are person who likes camping or not, it's hard to disagree with the rustic nostalgia of jumping on the trail, getting deep into the wilderness and setting up a tent. There are unknowns in the journey and you can't fully know what you will encounter, but for the time being, this tent becomes your shelter. You draw from the experiences that you have learned from in the past, and you prepare yourself for the adventure ahead. There will be beauty and there will be challenge. Perhaps a challenge like what came shortly after that gust of wind.

After the gust, we began to hear a low hum coming from down the valley. Soon that hum seemed to be approaching us, becoming much louder. It was no longer a hum, but now a ferocious roar. Then it hit us. Out of nowhere, we were hit with a turbulent windstorm. Dust was kicking up everywhere and our stuff was thrown in all directions. We ditched our s'mores, grabbed everything and headed to the tents! I suggested that we jump in our tents and hunker down, but they thought I was nuts and I was probably wisely overruled. The guys announced that we needed to break camp, throw everything in the car and get out of there. Which is exactly what we did. We drove into town and found a simple budget hotel. So we checked into the hotel, skin caked with dirt and sand in our ears. As we stepped into our rooms, you would've thought we were checking into the Ritz-Carlton. To be able to get clean,

and lay down in a soft bed and a quiet room was nothing short of glorious.

Right now, while we exist here in a broken, sin-tarnished world, we are on a journey, living in an earthly tent. Whether it be a season of peace or a season of turbulence, we must remember that this is not our permanent dwelling. Awaiting the faithful servants of Christ is a glorious inheritance, where pain is washed away and they are granted the eternal rest of their souls. If we understand this, how ought it shape our lives?

VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, watch the video for Session 2

Learn How on Page 79

After Watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

READ

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

Philippians 3:20-21

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

John 14:1-3

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In 4:16-18, Paul describes the contrast between light and temporary troubles and the weight of eternal glory. In what ways are the glories of heaven weightier than the troubles of this life?
2. Take a moment to understand the extent of Paul's sufferings by reading 2 Cor. 11:23-28. In reflecting on the scripture for this session, 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9, why do think Paul continues to be faithful and bold in his ministry after facing all of this?
3. Reflect on the difference between a "tent" and a "building". How does this metaphor relate to the difference between the earthly and heavenly realities?
4. Paul begins this section by saying, "Therefore, we do not lose heart." What in your life, right now, is causing you to "lose heart"? How does the truth of eternity with Christ affect your present situation?

SESSION FOUR - WEEKLY PLAN

■ Memory Monday

2 Corinthians 4:17

For our light and momentary troubles

are achieving for us

an eternal glory

that far outweighs them all.

After memorizing, think of something that is bothering or challenging you right now. How long, at most, could this thing that is bothering you last? The rest of the day? A week? A couple months? Or maybe this is something long-term that will last a couple years! Once you have your “maximum duration”, do your best to contemplate the idea of it next to eternity. How can you seek to honor the eternal God, during this light and momentary trouble?

■ Testimony Tuesday - Wendy

I had recently turned 40 in the summer of 2021 and for all forty of those years I never experienced the flu. Then, just like that, I was down with COVID. To say it was awful would be the understatement of the year. Day nine landed me in the ER. It wasn't until around day fifteen that I started to feel better. I was on the other side of it and then BOOM, back in the ER with double pneumonia. I had to work through that for most of a month, but once that was over, I was confident that I was back in action as the

wife, mom, and friend I knew I could be. I actually was feeling so good that I was making homemade chicken noodle soup for my friend's sick daughter. While I was doing that, nausea hit me, out of nowhere, like a ton of bricks! It just got worse from there. For the next 3 months I was basically bedridden. I could not keep any food down. Nothing helped the nausea and I had lost 20 pounds.

It was debilitating. I spent day after day unable to do anything but lay flat with my eyes closed. As the days went by I found myself broken, scared, confused, isolated, wondering if this was going to be my new normal indefinitely. I began to have worship music playing in the house nonstop. It was like being in constant conversation with the Lord, praying, pleading, praising and desperately trying to listen to His voice. In the moments the nausea subsided I would open my Bible and ask God to meet me there. I spent a lot of time in the Psalms and made my way to Isaiah, journaling when I could. The Holy Spirit was with me, teaching me what it looked like to wait upon the Lord. The scriptures encouraged me to hope, to anticipate, and to trust. It also showed me what was required of me! It took faith, patience, humility, meekness, long-suffering, keeping His commandments and enduring until the end. Isaiah 40:31 reminded me, "but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings of eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." I was still in the midst of the unknown, but He saw me and I could trust and hope in His promises.

Fast forward through countless doctor visits, tests and procedures, I was told I had a bacterial infection in my small intestine which would be extremely hard to get rid of. It took another 5 months, but I was finally feeling some relief and eventually normal again. Yet, this story was not over...6 months later I was diagnosed with breast cancer. For someone who had never broken a bone or had any major surgery, this news and all the waiting that came with it should have shook me. Instead, my cancer journey, although not easy, was filled with joy and with

His voice reminding me that He already taught me how to wait, to suffer, and to endure to the end! We are not promised that we will get to understand God's plans, but scripture assures us that His plans are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9) and we can trust in Him to see us through our toughest battles.

Worship Wednesday

Take a moment today to slow down and prayerfully reflect on the lyrics below and listen to the song at crosslinechurch.com/triumphandtragedy!

Today's Song: "Light & Momentary"

By Emily Hamilton, Jeff Luckey, Benji Cowart, lyrics © Curb Songs, Howiecowie Publishing

Verse 1

We remember
When the miracles still won't come
You're the answer
Your cross is still enough
We remember
When we lose our sight from the tears we cry
You're the answer
Your cross is still enough

Chorus

We hold tight to the promise of new life
Our hope in Jesus Christ
Will never fail or fall
These light and momentary trials
Are gaining us a prize
That far outweighs them all

Verse 2

We remember
When the calm won't come, when we feel unloved
You're the answer
Your cross is still enough
We remember
When the lies take hold, and the doubts won't go
You're the answer
Your cross is still enough

[Chorus]**Bridge**

There's nothing in this life that I could lose
That ever could compare to having You
God, there's nothing in this life that I could lose
That ever could compare to having You

[Chorus]

■ **Thanksgiving Thursday**

This week, take Thursday to offer up prayers of praise and thanksgiving, emphasizing **the hope of eternal life!**

Suggested topics:

- Thank God that one day all pain and sorrow will come to an end for those that believe
- Salvation! Jesus' work on the cross!
- The glory of heaven far outweighs our light and momentary troubles.

■ **Fasting Friday**

What I will fast from today:

What I will be specifically praying about today:

NOTES // PRAYER REQUESTS



SESSION Five

TRIUMPH IN THE MINISTRY OF
RECONCILIATION

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been wrong in your judgment of someone before? Of course you have. You, just like me, are human and we can get caught up in the snowball of a rumor or trip over a foolish assumption. Where we get all tangled up is the conclusions we make about motives, without understanding. “Oh, that person is only helping the boss move because he wants a raise.” “Did you hear her talk about the marathon that she is running? Okay, we get it, you think you’re better than us.” “They are all jerks. All they care about is winning.” It can be expressed in many forms and is a dangerous way of thinking. Though, it’s not new human behavior. It’s been around since the introduction of sin and it was certainly present in the generation of Paul. Do you remember how there were people in Corinth who were slandering Paul and spreading false rumors about the motives of his ministry? Well, in the portion of scripture that we will be going through, Paul is very intentional to clarify the motive for all his actions. And what greater motivator is there, but love.

“For Christ’s love compels us...” (2 Cor. 5:14)

No one could have been more wrong in their assumptions about someone than Paul, in his thoughts toward Jesus. Before he was Paul the Apostle, he was Saul the persecutor of Christians, trying to win God’s approval through his religiosity and his goal to eliminate these oppositional followers of Jesus. Though, that was a relationship that could only be mended by God, through Christ, and in an act of love, that is exactly what God did for Paul. He met Christ and was transformed into a new creation and given a new name. It was this act of love that motivated the rest of Paul’s life. It was this act of love that gave him new purpose—to share the same message of reconciliation that he, himself, experienced.

Tragedy is an aimless, purposeless, life. It's a swinging at the wind. Though triumph is waking up every morning and knowing that you are Christ's servant, spreading everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. (2. Cor. 2:14). As you finish up this study, let Paul's words in this passage of scripture ring in your heart as you go forth into a world that is in desperate need God's love, through Jesus.

VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, watch the video for Session 2

Learn How on Page 79

After Watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

READ

2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. ¹² We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

6 As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. ² For he says,

“In the time of my favor I heard you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you.”

I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.

Isaiah 49:8-13

This is what the Lord says:

*"In the time of my favor I will answer you,
and in the day of salvation I will help you;
I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people,
to restore the land*

*and to reassign its desolate inheritances,
⁹ to say to the captives, 'Come out,'
and to those in darkness, 'Be free!'*

*"They will feed beside the roads
and find pasture on every barren hill.*

*¹⁰ They will neither hunger nor thirst,
nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them.*

*He who has compassion on them will guide them
and lead them beside springs of water.*

*¹¹ I will turn all my mountains into roads,
and my highways will be raised up.*

*¹² See, they will come from afar—
some from the north, some from the west,
some from the region of Aswan."*

*¹³ Shout for joy, you heavens;
rejoice, you earth;
burst into song, you mountains!*

*For the Lord comforts his people
and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, when a person receives Christ, they are a “new creation.” What do you think it means to be made new in Christ?
2. Being a new creation, we are reconciled to God. In your own words, what does “reconciliation” mean? Check your definition by comparing 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 with Romans 5:10-11.
3. Paul closes out this section with a reference from Isaiah 49 about the “time of favor” and the “day of salvation”. As you read Isaiah 49:8-13, what can we learn about the work that Jesus came to do?
4. The “ministry of reconciliation” is the call that God has given to every believer to help others be reconciled to God. How do you think we, as a community, are doing in carrying out this ministry? How can you be an ambassador for Christ in your spheres of influence?

5. Do you see yourself as being compelled by the love of Christ? Why or why not?

6. Sometimes we see Bible characters as “super-christians”, which detaches us from pursuing lives that they model in scripture. Do you think that your commitment to Christ could look like Paul’s? What would it take?

TAKEAWAY:

What does God want you to personally hear from this passage?

What action does this passage prompt you to take?

SESSION FIVE - WEEKLY PLAN

■ Memory Monday

2 Corinthians 5:20

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors,
as though God were making
his appeal through us.*

We implore you on Christ's behalf:

Be reconciled to God.

Never forget that you are Christ's ambassador, called to carry the message of the Gospel to world around you! Who is somebody that acted as Christ's ambassador to you, teaching you about the good news of Jesus? How might you be that for someone else?

■ Testimony Tuesday - Jake

In my first life—those first eighteen years--I was lost. I had no direction or sense of purpose. You would not know it from the outside, looking in, though. I had a loving family, a close inner circle of friends, and my work ethic allowed me to succeed at most of the activities I put my attention to. Still, I felt empty inside. I had no real vision of my purpose or my life going forward. My heart hurt, but I did not know why.

July 4, 2001 was what I call my "judgment day". I was

about to go on a journey that was unforeseen and unlike anything I had ever experienced. I was hanging out with my friends, smoking weed and freestyle rapping. I was waiting for my turn to drop a dope rap, when I had a random thought. I was sitting on a ledge, crouched over with my feet in front of me and my elbows on my legs and my hands together—a position often taken when I was getting ready to freestyle. That's when I thought to myself, "Let me try to make my hands melt together."

I knew it was a strange thought, but sure enough, seconds later, my hands melted together, forming the letter "A"; neon-green Christmas trees and Smurfs started to fly out of the center of the "A" towards my face. Realizing I'd just seen something unreal, I instantly jerked my body back. My heart rate dramatically increased as I started to have a panic attack. My friends, noticing my reaction, looked over at me. I completely downplayed the shocking situation by freestyling. However, I was in full panic mode, realizing that I'd just hallucinated something that was not really there. I was freaking out.

This was the start of a twelve-day bad trip. I cannot tell you all the experiences I had during these twelve days, but it was my worst nightmare come to reality. It was the most difficult thing I have ever gone through in my entire life. I was seeing evil images and demonic shadows that seemed to follow me everywhere.

I wanted to make sure this secret remained hush-hush. What secret? That I was losing my mind! I believed that if I told someone, they would look at me differently, or try to lock me up. That was an ongoing thought and fear. I pictured myself in a white padded room, with a straitjacket hugging my body, seeing disturbing images for the rest of my life.

On day twelve of my horror story, I at last told my mom the truth. I told her that I believed it was karma catching up to me. I told her of all the wrong things I'd done. I told

her about all the drugs and partying. I told her the truth about the hallucinations. All the things I was seeing that I knew were not really there. All of the fears and negative thoughts that plagued my mind.

My mom wept. She was silent for a long time. That concerned me, because I was hoping she would give me instant words of comfort and wisdom. Breaking the silence, my mom looked at me and said something that would transform my life forever. She said, "I know someone that can help you. His name is Jesus."

I remember thinking to myself, "Let's go meet Him! Right now!" Hard to believe, but in the state of mind that I was in, I had no clue who this person named "Jesus" was. I thought He might be a doctor or some sort of specialist. My mother continued to say, "Jesus is God. He loves you. He cares for you. He wants to save you. But you have to commit your life 100% to Him. Follow Him and He will save you." I trusted what my mom what was telling me and at that moment, there were no questions, no hesitations or sidebar thoughts. I simply and unequivocally said, "YES!"

I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior right then and there and I committed my life 100 percent to Him. Right after I opened my eyes from that two-minute prayer, my hallucinations and thoughts of losing my mind miraculously ceased. Completely gone! I was healed in a few seconds! It was Jesus. He led me out of the darkness and into His light! I was a lost and broken individual and God gave me a second chance. He healed my shattered mind through the power of Jesus.

Regardless of your circumstances, God is near you. He hears you. He loves you. He is calling you to be His own. Regardless of your current lifestyle, choose Him today and forever. He is faithful to restore and heal your brokenness.

Worship Wednesday

Take a moment today to slow down and prayerfully reflect on the lyrics below and listen to the song at crosslinechurch.com/triumphandtragedy!

Today's Song: "Battle Belongs"

By Phil Wickham and Brian Johnson, lyrics © Be Essential Songs, Bethel Music Publishing

Verse 1

When all I see is the battle, You see my victory
When all I see is the mountain, You see a mountain moved
And as I walk through the shadow,
Your love surrounds me
There's nothing to fear now, for I am safe with You

Chorus

So when I fight, I'll fight on my knees
With my hands lifted high
Oh God, the battle belongs to You
And every fear I lay at Your feet
I'll sing through the night
Oh God, the battle belongs to You

Verse 2

And if You are for me, who can be against me? Yeah
For Jesus, there's nothing impossible for You
When all I see are the ashes, You see the beauty,
When all I see is a cross, God, You see the empty tomb

[Chorus]

Bridge

Almighty Fortress, You go before us
Nothing can stand against the power of our God
You shine in the shadow, You win every battle
Nothing can stand against the power of our God (3x)

[Chorus]

■ Thanksgiving Thursday

This week, take Thursday to offer up prayers of praise and thanksgiving, emphasizing **the opportunities that God has set before you to make an impact for His Kingdom.**

Suggested topics:

- The platforms for influence that God has provided you
- Thank God for the gifts and abilities that He has given you
- Praise God for the people that He surrounds you with
- The followers of Jesus have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel

■ Fasting Friday

What I will fast from today:

What I will be specifically praying about today:

NOTES // PRAYER REQUESTS



APPENDICES

How to Access RightNow Media

RightNow media is your all-inclusive ticket to tens of thousands of streaming videos with vetted and fantastic Christian content. There is no topic you can't find a Bible Study or training about. It's basically the Netflix of Christian Content.

The wide breadth of content can be accessed via a web browser or the app available for iOS, Android, Roku TV, Apple TV, and Fire TV.

Furthermore, if needed, you can access content simultaneously with others, all online, with *RightNow Media Virtual Groups*.

TO START YOUR RIGHTNOW MEDIA EXPERIENCE:

In a web browser...

1. Go to Crosslinechurch.com/Community-groups
2. Find the link to gain RightNow Media access
3. Create an account, login, and you are ready to go!

On your phone...

1. Text "RightNow Crossline" to 41411
2. Create an account and you are ready to go!

Streaming videos for ***Tragedy and Triumph: Kingdom Conversations for Real Life will be found on your RightNow Media landing page or can be found with a simple search in the search bar.

We encourage you to look around the many different libraries for content that is appealing to you. Happy browsing!

A Word to Hosts / Leaders of the Group

Beginning to lead this 5-week community group study, you likely have a wide variety of emotions going through you right now. Some of you are beyond excited and rejoicing that this study is finally here. Some of you may be terrified and uncomfortable, questioning why you've decided to do this. Wherever you are now, allow us to share one thing we know with great confidence—**you and your group will be blessed because you stepped out in faith!**

We have a specific encouragement for you: **YOU CAN DO THIS!** Our enemy, the devil, would want you to believe that you can't or that you should be afraid, but God is with you, and He has great plans for you and each person in your group! The Bible states that “[You] can do all things through Christ who strengthens [you]” (Philippians 4:13). The Lord proclaims over you, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

In addition, you are not alone. Take full advantage of the Church that God has put around you. Reach out to fellow hosts, key volunteers, leaders, or church staff. We all want to come alongside you and help you lead a fruitful study. Don't try to do this in isolation, but instead link arms with your brothers and sisters.

May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you as you host and shepherd the group of people God has entrusted to you!

Creating a Multiplying Group

“Every day, they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:46-47)

The traditional and most widely accepted understanding of a small group in Western culture is that it is a place for you to find friends from your church that you can grow close to over the course of years as you study the Bible. It is a social gathering with a spiritual emphasis. Then, once you find the right mix of friends, you protect it so that you can have an inner-circle community that you can do life with; we believe this is a central part of small groups.

However, this definition is not fully complete because it is lacking the missional purpose of a small group. As we see in the passage above, the Lord added daily those who were being saved as a response to the fellowship of believers meeting in their homes and in the temple courts. As a follower of Jesus, isn't that your greatest hope? People being saved? If we collectively share this hope, we must acknowledge that it needs to be a core emphasis of our small group gatherings.

Similarly, small groups of believers must also have the same heart and attitude as Christ, who compassionately saw the crowds of Israel as “sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36) and who pulled the outcasts and overlooked into community with him. So, whether it's someone lost in sin or an uninvited brother or sister, small groups of God's people must have open doors.

Anything healthy and attractive will grow. If your group is healthy, you should expect it to grow. Our job is not to stifle growth, but rather, with prayerful discernment, seek out the will of God for our group. That said, here are five helpful tips that you can weave into the leadership of your group that will create a culture of multiplication while still maintaining closeness with those in the group.

- **Communicate and meta-message the vision:** One of the essential parts of creating a multiplying group is to be clear about the mission and purpose of your group. This means that it would be wise to communicate the vision for your group at the start of each new study and check in with your group members about that vision. You can also meta-message the vision in group discussion throughout each study.
- **Stay flexible:** Be very careful not to get too rigid in the structure or makeup of your group, which would prohibit newcomers from participating and stunt growth. Instead, be open to changing things up and check in with your group members often.
- **Share the air:** An essential part of being an inclusive group is ensuring everyone has the opportunity to speak and contribute to discussion. Be mindful of overtaking conversations, and if you notice someone who may be introverted or reluctant to speak up, gently provide some encouragement. It may be just what they need!
- **Celebrate newcomers:** If you or one of your group members happens to bring a newcomer (after first notifying the group), celebrate their participation! Be sure to extend loving hospitality that makes them feel genuinely welcome. Do your very best, as a group, not to come off as cliquy or exclusive.

- **Train up the members of your group:** As a leader, you should always be seeking to train the group members to lead as well. You can do this by asking them to facilitate conversation, lead prayer, set up the meeting schedule, select and lead a study, etc. Then be sure to follow up with them about it. If you are doing everything yourself, you are not creating a multiplying group.
- **Plant seeds of leadership:** One of the biggest reasons people do not lead or serve in ways they are capable of is that they are not asked. As you begin to notice certain members of the group evidencing leadership skills and spiritual maturity, it may be time to ask them if they would consider leading a group of their own. That can mean passing the torch of leadership to them OR having them start their own group OR splitting/subgrouping the group (which is growing) and having them lead the other group out of the split.

Having a multiplying group in which you truly see people connected and brought to salvation through is wildly rewarding. I fully understand that it may seem to be disruptive to the closeness of your group. Still, counterintuitively, it brings a group much closer as you engage in mission together and see God working through it. Don't feel like you have to start over every time your group grows, but rather, just pull people on board for the journey that you are already on and trust the Holy Spirit!

Commitment Contract

(Some groups may want to consider utilizing this simple commitment contract as a way of keeping each other accountable to healthy group participation.)

- I commit to taking this group seriously.
- I commit to being intentional with my attendance to this group.
- I commit to engaging in conversation.
- I commit to respecting my fellow group members and keeping everything I hear confidential.
- I commit to being honest.
- I commit to all the things listed above because I value community, and I desire to grow closer to all those in my group.

Sign: _____ Date: _____

The Romans Road: An Understanding of the Gospel

As we look at the book of Romans, written by the apostle Paul, we can see that it provides a detailed map for our salvation and eternal fellowship with God. Just follow these steps:

1. We must acknowledge God as the Creator of everything, accepting our humble position in God's created order and purpose. Romans 1:20-21

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

2. We must realize that we are sinners and that we need forgiveness. None of us are worthy under God's standards. Romans 3:23

"For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."

3. God gave us the way to be forgiven of our sins. He showed us His love by giving us the potential for life through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:8

"But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

4. If we remain sinners, we will die. However, if we repent of our sins, and accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we will have eternal life. Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

5. Confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead and you are saved. Romans 10:9-10

“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Other Crossline Groups Resources

If you enjoyed this series, you might also enjoy the other small group studies produced by Crossline Community Church. Small-Group workbooks are available at Crossline Community Church. You can access all the content and arrange a pickup of hardcopy workbooks by going to Crosslinechurch.com/community-groups

Getting to Know Series

The Man. The Myth. The Legend. Getting to Know the Real Jesus

I AM: Getting to Know the God of the Bible

Acts 1-4 Series

Expectation: Living as Children of Promise

Outpouring: Unleashed with Holy Spirit Power

Advancement: Moving in Authority and Confidence

XII. Experiencing your Best Relationship with God and Others

FAITH. Against All Hope

Stepping Up. Stepping Out. Courageous Faith for Kingdom Purpose (Joshua Study)

About the Editors

Jordan Gash is the Community Life Pastor at Crossline Community Church in Laguna Hills, CA. He graduated from Azusa Pacific Seminary with a M.A. in Pastoral Studies. Jordan has been working in both the Church and Christian organizational spheres since 2006. In his role as Community Life Pastor, Jordan oversees and shepherds a vast network of Community Groups. He has contributed to multiple adult small group curricula, including authoring the fifteen sessions of the Crossline-produced series on Acts 1-4, as well as several youth ministry groups' curricula. As a speaker at conferences and camps, he is passionate about encouraging practical application to Biblical truths. He is married to his wife, Alexandra and has three young sons.

Dr. JP Jones is the founding Senior Pastor of Crossline Church in Laguna Hills, CA. JP has served as a Pastor in Southern California for more than thirty years. A former staff member with Campus Crusade for Christ, JP has traveled the world sharing the gospel, teaching the Bible, and training leaders. JP received his Doctor of Ministry in Theology and Apologetics from Liberty University and completed his Post-Graduate studies in Pastoral Ministry from Talbot School of Theology. JP's radio and podcast ministry, *Truth that Changes Lives*, is listened to in more than 160 countries. For over 25 years, JP has been an Adjunct Professor of Biblical Studies at Biola University and Talbot Seminary. JP is the author of numerous small group studies and the men's book, *Facing Goliath*, published by Baker Books. JP is a popular speaker at Men's Events, Marriage Retreats, and Family Camps. JP is married to his wife, Donna, and they have three children and three grandchildren. To listen to JP's teaching ministry you can podcast, *Truth that Changes Lives*, or go to oneplace.com and listen on internet radio. JP's small group studies are available at rightnowmedia.org and his book, *Facing Goliath*, can be ordered at amazon.com or any Christian book outlet. To find JP's blog and other resources, go to pastorjppjones.com.

Crossline Community Church

Three words describe the history of Crossline Church: Prayer, Faith and Relationships. In the fall of 2004 I began to seriously pray about the future God had for me and my family. I was at a crossroads in ministry and needed clear direction from God. I went to Forest Home, a Christian conference center in the San Bernardino Mountains and earnestly sought the Lord. Praying on the spot where God spoke to Billy Graham, I asked God to speak to me about where and how He wanted me to serve Him. That time of prayer launched a 10 day period of prayer and fasting to seek the confirmation and leading of God. True to His Word, God spoke to me and others about the vision to start a church that would reach both seekers and committed disciples with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. For a period of four months, a weekly prayer meeting gathered to pray and dream about God's direction. Following the pattern of the early disciples in Acts 1-2, the founding core group of Crossline spent a focused 10 day season of prayer before it launched the first public worship services in February of 2005.

Our new congregation grew over the next 4 years to a little over 1,000 in attendance. With growth came good challenges and once again we spent a focused period of prayer concerning a move from the high school campus to a permanent home for our church. That season of prayer was answered miraculously by God and Crossline now meets at its 25 acre home in Laguna Hills, CA. Our congregation has grown to over 2,000 and prayer continues to be a core value for the daily life of Crossline, its vision and its future.

Crossline began as a commitment of faith. Not sponsored by any denomination, foundation or church, the Pastors and volunteers stepped into an initial ministry with a million dollar a year budget. Having no meeting place, offices or staff, within a few months God miraculously answered prayer and provided everything we needed to be a mobile church. From its inception, Crossline has had a core commitment to believe great things

about God, to ask great things of God and attempt great things for God! What began as a prayer meeting with 16 people has grown to a local church of over 2,000.

Crossline Church is a body made up of ordinary people who believe in an extra-ordinary God. We believe that everyone is on a spiritual journey and whether you are a first time visitor or have been with us from day one, you are a vital part of our church right now and of the community He is shaping us to be for the future. At Crossline it our desire to connect people to Jesus Christ and to one another. Our motto is, "Love God, love people and have a blast!" We would love for you to join us. Together we can do great things for God!

Dr. JP Jones
Founding Senior Pastor

Sunday Services:

Main Services

9:00am & 11:00am – Worship Center

9:00am (Classic/Traditional) – Chapel

Information:

23331 Moulton Parkway
Laguna Hills, CA 92653

(949) 916-0250

crosslinechurch.com

“I have told you these things, so that in me you will have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” -Jesus (John 16:33)

You are on a spiritual journey, whether you realize it or not. Every decision you make, goal you aspire to or relationship you invest in is a testament to what you are most craving in your spirit. They are like steps on a trail—a trail that is leading you somewhere. The question is: Are you confident about the “somewhere” that you are being led to? For those of us that have chosen to place their faith in Jesus, we see the eternal glory of His Heavenly Kingdom as our destination. However, even in our resolve to pursue Christ, we face the tragedies and trials that come from living in this world each and every day. In this 5-session small groups study, we will walk through the first five chapters of 2 Corinthians and explore what it looks like cling to the triumphs that are found in Jesus during life’s hardest moments.



CROSSLINE
COMMUNITY CHURCH