

Small Group Study Guide

Near to God when Unfairly Alone |

Job 19:21-25

From Sunday May 17, 2020

Appetizer:

Question: Take a moment to share something that happened to you recently that you perceived to be unfair. How did you handle it? What was your reaction?

A couple questions from the passage:

If you are not familiar with the story of Job, it is basically about a man who had done nothing wrong going through a trial that included great suffering. This trial was supposed to prove that Job only worshipped God because he had received good gifts from God.

Have someone read Job 19:21-25. This is just a small section of poetry that recounts how Job wrestles with the predicament that he is in. Job is by and large a book of poetry. It is interesting how the use of language is so important when it comes to dealing with our suffering! What do you notice about the language and tone of the passage?

Main Course:

The main point that was made during Sunday's sermon was that God is trustworthy even when the "patterns of justice" don't match our experience. Jeff mentioned that Job shows a debate between the wisdom of man vs. the wisdom of God when it comes to justice. The wisdom of man suggests that justice is based on a reward/consequence model: If you do something bad, you will be punished. If you do something that is good, you will be rewarded.

Question: Is this a fair assessment of how most of us perceive justice? Are there other ways to perceive justice that humans practice? And what IS justice? How do you describe it in your own words?

While Job is suffering, his friends come by and ask a series of questions to see what he has done wrong, because, if God is a just God, the only reason why Job would be suffering is because he had done something wrong.

Question: Have you heard someone say that your suffering is because of sin in your life? Have you ever felt that that was the case? Do the Scriptures provide some arguments that suffering can be a result of sin? How do you balance the knowledge that suffering can be the result of sin in your life, that suffering can sometimes be a test, and that suffering is sometimes beyond our understanding?

Dessert:

North American culture has a very strong view on individual rights and freedoms, and when infringed upon, our cries for justice are often loud and clear. Sometimes we blame God. But the book of Job ends with God saying to Job that the world he created is more sophisticated than what Job thought. In this light, when we find ourselves "unfairly alone"—meaning that we've felt isolated through injustice—we can practice telling ourselves three truth statements. These are as follows:

1. Humility. Tell yourself: I don't know everything about how God works.

Question: How is this a difficult thing to say to ourselves? How is it freeing?

2. Trust. Tell yourself: I don't need to be in charge.

Question: How does being in charge affect the way we feel about injustice or suffering?

3. Focus. Tell yourself: God is up to something bigger than I can imagine.

Question: When we feel that God is not being just or is not practicing the patterns of justice that we see in the world, what does reminding ourselves that God is up to something bigger than we can imagine do to our view of God?

Challenge: Take time this week when you wake up on the morning to say these three things to yourself: I don't know everything. I am not in charge. God is up to something good.

Take some time to pray for each other as a group. One way you can do this is just to assign a person to pray for to each person in the group and have them pray for one another.