

Small Group Discussion Guide

“Make Room (pt. 2)” - 02.21.16

Scripture: Acts 12:1-25

Bottom Line: In the midst of your suffering there is a great hope.

INTRODUCTION

This week we are discussing a heavy topic. In light of the heaviness begin your discussion time with prayer and ask God to work through your group as you dive into one of the most difficult things in our world: suffering.

1) What are some types of ways we suffer in our world?

Answer: a) Suffering as a consequence for our own mistakes b) Suffering as a consequence from others mistakes towards us. c) Suffering from things beyond our control (natural disasters, cancer, chronic pain, etc.) d) Suffering as a result of God's wrath toward sin and injustice.

2) In what ways have you experienced suffering in your own life? In the midst of that suffering what is your typical response towards God?

UNPACKING THE GOSPEL

Jesus promised to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth because nothing would ever stop the spread of His church. In Acts 12 we see God going against the mighty nation of Rome. Incredibly, Rome doesn't stand a chance! This encounter doesn't come without great loss and suffering as we see one of Jesus' friends tragically murdered by King Herod.

Reads Acts 12:1-25

Often times we read the Bible and forget these were real people with real emotions. James experienced real sorrow before dying and the church would have greatly mourned over his loss.

1) How does the death of James point to the truth that in our suffering God is not punishing us?

Answer: James was doing good in loving people and spreading the gospel. He was not being punished for doing good. In light of the gospel we know that as Christians we will no longer experience the wrath of God towards our sin because Jesus has already taken our punishment. In Christ, God will always take great delight in us. This is really good news!

2) God says all things work together for the good of those who love Jesus! How is James' death a good thing?

Answer: James, as a Christian, died a long time before his physical death. The call of a Christian is to die to self and live for Christ. When we are saved by God we are giving over our lives to God and He gives us the life we really wanted in Jesus. As Paul says, to live is Christ and to die is gain. What was seen as a tragic event for James merely ushered him in to the greatest thing we could ever hope for in experiencing the glory of God and being in His presence. His death brought glory to God as it was used to continue to spread the gospel.

LIVING OUT THE GOSPEL IN MY EVERYDAY LIFE

1) How do we find hope in the midst of our suffering?

Answer: Read Revelation 21:1-5 and know that there will come a day when all suffering will cease and we will remember it no more as God makes ALL THINGS new!

2) Take time to share any suffering you're currently struggling with and pray for those things with your group.