

Creekside LifeGroup Study
The Pandemic: Calm in the Present
Sunday, May 24th, 2020

LEADER NOTES

Hi LifeGroup leaders! Over the next two weeks we're looking at the topic of pandemic. In this season of COVID-19 pandemic it can be tempting to give in to fear. The result can be to live a life of anxiety, trusting in something or someone other than God. Trusting in God at a time like this is the only true place to put your trust. He will be faithful to do what he has promised us no matter the enemy we face. In this study we'll be reminded of the importance of focusing our trust on God. The goal is that your group members would experience the hope that comes from trusting God.

1. Share with the group your emotional experiences during this pandemic
 - Were you surprised by some of your emotions?
 - What have you learned about yourself?

Mental health is a struggle for many during the pandemic. Depression, anxiety, fear, anger and other negative emotions can begin to overtake our lives. Some of your group members may find it easy to identify and talk about their emotions. Others will find this more of a challenge and may tell you – "I'm fine". Use this time to create a safe place for your group members to share some of the emotions they have been experiencing. This sharing can be a foundation for your time of prayer for one another.

2. How has God surprised you during this Pandemic season? Has he been working in ways you would have never expected?

Taking our eyes off of ourselves and onto God is a key pathway to experience calm in this present situation. Allow your group members some time to think about how God has surprised them during the pandemic. They may not have an immediate answer for you. To get the ball rolling, be prepared to share your own experiences with the group.

3. Matthew 6:31-34 – "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

- a. This fragment of teaching from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount has some great lines in it. Take a moment to read it over a few times and see what stands out to you. Share with your group what word or phrase stood out to you and why you liked it or found it meaningful.

Jesus tells us "do not worry". This is His command. As such, it must be possible for us to not worry! How do we do this? Instead of allowing fears to creep into our lives from the pandemic, we can trust God. We do this in God's power, depending on Him for strength to trust in Him.

"your heavenly Father knows you need them." God knows our needs and He promises to provide our needs. He will meet us in our time of need no matter what the pandemic brings.

"But seek first His kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." What is the antidote to worry? Seek God's kingdom first in your life. This means putting God's kingdom ahead of the news, the trust we may have in science and medicine, and all of our fears. To seek God's kingdom is an active process where we regularly pray, read Scripture, build community with other followers of Jesus and serve other's needs.

"Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself." It is tempting to worry about things that are out of our control, like what might happen in the future. Rather than worry, we need to remember that God is large and in charge. God is in control and the final outcome is in His hands.

- b. Jesus seems to be saying in this passage that instead of worrying we should trust in our heavenly Father and instead use our energies to seek his Kingdom and his righteousness. What do you think this shift looks like? How do our days and our lives change when we stop worrying and instead seek God's kingdom and his righteousness?

One key way our lives can change is in the way we invest our energies. How much time do I spend ingesting the latest news reports vs focusing on my daily time with God? How am I looking out for the needs of others rather than just worrying about how my needs will be met? Here's a practical idea: write down the names of 3 people you can call, just to check in with them to see how they are doing. If you're able to talk with them on the phone, ask them, "How can I pray for you today?" then pray with them right over the phone! It's amazing how God can use these small acts of service to bless the person we serve and to refocus us from worry to Jesus.

4. 2 Corinthians 10:5 - “. . . we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”
Philippians 4:8 – “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”
 - a. By combining these two ideas from Paul we get a powerful antidote to fear and worry. First, we guard our minds from negativity and lies and second we direct our minds toward ideas that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable. Often our experiences of living out our faith can be helpful to one another. Spend some time sharing examples of how you have “taken thoughts captive” and focused on “excellent and praiseworthy” things in your own life.

Missions Prayer Requests:

Creekside supports Kelley Myles and Hannah Miller with Power2Change Digital Strategies as they mentor and disciple people online. Please pray for them:

Praise God for 168 newly processed mentors in the last 30 days!

We currently have an overabundance of women wanting mentors. Pray for enough mentor capacity to connect with them.

(Kelley) Pray for mentees I'm sharing the gospel with from Egypt, India, and the Philippines. (SC, Lou, Sarah and Minnie) as well as mentors I am coaching (Char, Glenda, Jess, Dannie) to help their mentees discover Jesus.

(Hannah) Pray for the Farsi Digital Strategy website and the launch of "Issues I Face" (IIF) website in Farsi (ba2am.com).

Pray for Iranian mentees with whom I'm sharing the Gospel as well as mentors I am coaching to help their mentees discover and follow Jesus.

Pray for more mentors, translator and ministry partners for the Farsi DS ministry