

APRIL 10, 2022
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
EASTER WEEK 2 | THE WEEPING WARRIOR
JOHN 11:17-37
WINTER QUARTER WEEK 13 OF 13

Getting to Know Each Other Better

1. What kind of job could you never do?

In reality, there are a lot of them that I could never do. One of the first that came to mind was teaching high school math. I am terrible at math. When I was in college I had to take math classes for non-math majors! And I chose my major in part because it allowed me to take these less taxing classes.

Another one is “be a carpenter.” I am terrible at working with my hands. Just the worst. I’m one of those guys who knows who to call when things need to be repaired. I’m not a “do it yourselfer.” I rarely go to Home Depot. I think you get the point.

How about you?

Renewed by Grace/Equipped as Disciples

Read John 11:17-37

2. What are some general kinds of things that stand out to you from this account? Why?

For this question I want to provide an opportunity for people to give some general, high level kinds of answers. I’m not looking for details or deep dives. That comes later.

Maybe the responses might be along the lines of Ryan’s outline -

- God sees our sorrow.
- God empathizes with our anguish.
- God gets angry over death.
- God walks with us through our pain and sorrow. He doesn’t just see it, but He enters into it with us. He weeps with us and for us. And He weeps Himself for He is hurting, too.
- God has emotions and He is not an emotionally distant Being. He is not that “unmoved mover.”
- What else might you say?

3. How does the way Jesus is portrayed strengthen or challenge your existing views of God? Does anything in this account cause discomfort? Why?

I really wrote this question to give us the chance to talk about our views on God’s emotional life and the way He deals with the pain in our lives. Some see Him as emotionless, unengaged and actually disinterested. Others see Him as having a rich emotional life whereby He feels what we feel and He allows that to affect Him and He gets involved in our lives because He loves and cares about/for us. Jesus really opens the door for us and gives us a clear view of who and how God is.

How do the people in your group see Him? How does this passage strengthen or challenge the views they hold?

Here are some thoughts from Ryan’s teaching notes -

- Jesus answers the problem of evil by entering our pain... not just healing our hurt. [My comment is this - He could heal the hurt without entering the pain. Doctors can heal without feeling any of the pain their patient's feel, both physically and emotionally. God feels the pain we feel and walks with us, helping and healing along the way. We can "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15) because He did/does.]
- What we need is an arm around us rather than an answer given to us. This is the very reason for the incarnation. God knows that we don't just need answers, we need presence. Not just a message, but a messenger. Not information, but affection.
- The Greek concept of God was that he has no emotions. Plato's god was an unmoved mover. Detached and barely involved, god was certainly not personally invested or connected. However, the Judeo-Christian belief about God is distinctly different. Throughout the Scriptures we see that God is an emotional being. He gets jealous (Ex. 20:5), angry (Jer. 30:25), loving (Jer. 31:1), compassionate (Hos. 11:8), joyful (Lk. 10:21), and so many other emotions. God is personally connected to and invested in his creation. Jesus doesn't just know about our suffering; he enters our pain. He empathizes with our anguish.
- I remember a Seinfeld episode where Jerry, who was a comedian, was dating a woman who wouldn't laugh. Even when she thought something was funny, she would say with deadpan stoicism, "that's very funny." I think that's the way a lot of people view God. "That's too bad that you're walking through that," but with no expressed emotion. The God of the universe couldn't possibly be interested in what I'm going through. And yet we see here that he weeps!.
- He knows the end of the story, but he's still moved by the middle.
- Jesus does the same for us – he weeps with us. We'll often say things like "break my heart for what breaks yours..." but what if it's just as true that we should acknowledge that what breaks our hearts breaks his? Weeping is partly God's answer to our suffering.
- 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. (Romans 12:15)
Jesus is practicing what his people preached and he's holding out an invitation to us to be deeply connected to all that going on in our own heart and in the lives of others... he's calling us to be present and to enter in.

Does anything cause discomfort? I was thinking along the lines of, "Does anything cause discomfort when it comes to empathizing with others, or feeling emotion yourself?" Jesus both empathized and felt emotion. Perhaps empathizing is feeling emotion, but I hope you understand the distinction I am trying to make. He didn't just hurt with Martha and Mary, He actually hurt Himself. I think "hurting Himself" implies a deeper level of hurt than does empathizing.

A lot of us struggle with empathy and/or letting ourselves feel our own pain and hurt. This is where I believe the discomfort might come in.

4. What do you learn from Jesus about how to be a good friend to others in pain?

The "answers" for this question come from Ryan's points about how to "see" people. One of his bullets was "He sees our sorrow." Then he talked about how to see sorrow, or more specifically, how to see people. Here is what he said -

- First, we have to make time. In our fast-paced world, people can be an inconvenience. They can stand in the way of doing what we really want to do, which is making progress

or getting somewhere. We don't see the people; we just see the problem they're creating for us. Let's not be so busy or hurried that we miss the mission.

- Second, we must engage the uncomfortable. We cannot resist situations and topics that make us squirm. What if the situations that make us most uncomfortable are actually the places of greatest invitation? I know, we often don't know what to say and we don't want to say the wrong thing, and it causes us to stay distanced. But here, Jesus is inviting and calling us to enter with humble boldness. I love that Jesus isn't afraid of entering the mess. He's not afraid of the blood and guts and brokenness and awkward conversations. And if Jesus isn't afraid of the mess, we don't need to clean up for him to enter, but we also shouldn't wait until others are "clean" for us to engage with them either.
- Third, we must resist labeling people. It's often easier to name someone by their struggle than it is to listen to their story. I can either see people or label people, but I cannot do both. When you hear someone's story, you might think, "If I'd grown up like them, or walked through what they've walked through, I'd probably believe what they believe." If we can get to that place, we'll resist the tendency in a culture of outrage to demonize people with whom we disagree.

What you could do is read some or all of what I copied and pasted and then ask people to share how doing these things will make them a better friend to others. You could also ask them which of the three seems to be most important for them to focus on right now. You could also ask them if anyone came to mind as they listened to the message or to the review of the points.

5. How does this account help you process any pain or frustration with God which you might be dealing with right now?

This is more of a general, open-ended question to give people a chance to share any insights they got from the message and/or the discussion.

The idea here is that Martha and Mary are frustrated that Jesus hasn't shown up earlier. And they express that frustration to Him. (So here's one way this account helps - it shows us it's okay to communicate our frustration to God.)

How does what Jesus gives them upon learning of their frustration help us process any pain or frustration? I copied and pasted above that He gives presence when we think all we need are answers, that He is a messenger when we think what we really need is a message, and that He gives affection when maybe we think that all we need is information. Now I think He sometimes gives answers, a message and information, but not always and not always right away. Does knowing this help you in any way? And what of Ryan's thought that frustration with God is actually a sign of deep faith?

Sent in Love

6. What is one way you will apply the text this week?

Some final thoughts -

As you have read, there is a lot in this week's message that can be discussed. I don't want you to feel pressured to get to all of the questions. As always, please continue to pray and feel free to ask the questions which seem most significant to you as you think about your group. I trust you and the ways God leads you as you shepherd your group. I will continue to pray for you and that He will do His work. Thank you for creating space for God to work. This is an important role of the Life Group leader.