



Sermon Discussion Questions

Sunday, February 19, 2012

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Series: Hope in a House of Blues

Note to Group Leaders:

During Hope in a House of Blues, many of the questions and passages should stir places in a person's life that are sometimes really hard to deal with. So, you can expect two responses to many of the questions: 1) Silence-because they may not be ready to share those places; or 2) Deep, painful things to be shared and you not knowing what to do with that.

So, as you ask questions, be patient. Be ok with silence to give people time to think about how to answer. But also, look in our bulletin for the details of the "Forgiveness" Seminar that started February 13 and encourage people with deep brokenness to consider being a part of that time. It's a 3-week seminar that people can attend any of the weeks.

Introduce it:

A modern day song that seems to paint "Hope" and "Blues" all in the same song is Dave Matthews Band's, "Funny the way it is". Read the lyrics as a group: (if you have the song, play it for the group)

*Lying in the park on a beautiful day,
Sunshine in the grass, and the children play.
Siren's passing, fire engine red,
Someone's house is burning down on a day like this?*

*The evening comes and we're hanging out,
On the front step, and a car rolls by with the windows rolled down,
And that war song is playing, "why can't we be friends?"
Someone is screaming and crying in the apartment upstairs*

*(Chorus) Funny the way it is, if you think about it
Somebody's going hungry and someone else is eating out
Funny the way it is, Am I right or wrong
Somebody's heart is broken and it becomes your favorite song*

*The way your mouth feels in your lovers kiss
Like a pretty bird on a breeze or water to a fish
A bomb blast brings a building crashing to the floor
You can hear the laughter, while the children play "war"*

*(Chorus) Funny the way it is, if you think about it
One kid walks 10 miles to school, another's dropping out
Funny the way it is, not right or wrong
On a soldier's last breath his baby's being born*

*(Bridge) Standing on a bridge, watch the water passing under me
It must've been much harder when there was no bridge, just water
Now the world is small. Remember how it used to be,
With mountains and oceans and winters and rivers and stars?*

*Watch the sky, the jet planes, so far out of my reach
Is there someone up there looking down on me?
Boy chase a bird, so close but every time
He'll never catch her, but he can't stop trying*

What is the tension that Dave Matthews is speaking about in this song?

*while something good is happening to one, something bad happening to another. Not right or wrong, just "funny the way it is". The world is a place where both are happening all the time.

What are days that you can remember where something great was going on with you yet at the same time something horrible going on with a friend of your's? Or vice versa? In those situations, what does it tempt you to ask God?

Revisit it: learn the passage preached on.

Read Romans 5:1-8

In Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul talks about our need for justification. In Romans 3:21-4:25, he talks about how we are justified. In 5:1, Paul uses the word "therefore" which shows a connection of all that he has just explained with what he is now about to explain.

What does it mean to be justified?

*made right, penalty is paid for, justice is served, things are right again.

Paul now talks about the "fruits" or "results" of our justification. List all the results he gives in verses 5:1-5.

*We have peace with God; we have gained access to grace; we stand in grace; we rejoice in hope of God's glory; we can rejoice in sufferings; God poured out his love into our hearts.

Think of friends you have that do not follow Christ. What do you think they long for in life? How do the "fruits" you just listed speak to those things they long for?

*Leader: point of this is to help the group make the connection between the deep longings their friends really have with the deeper things that our justification gives. We tend to look at salvation from the surface level and also look at our friend's desires from the surface level.

Much of the time we imagine salvation as being an "escape from hardship". How does Paul describe suffering for the person of faith?

*They rejoice in them and don't just try to escape from them. They realize that hardships produce character, and ultimately hope. Therefore, salvation is not an escape from hardship, it's a freedom from being controlled by those hardships.

We have learned in this series that grief and loss are a process: you hurt, you hate, you heal and you hope. These are not things to be rushed through. Paul affirms this with his use of the word "perseverance". Why does he tell us that Hope does not disappoint us?

*Because that hope comes from a God that loves us. Paul then describes that love as one that came when we were ungodly, sinners, broken from God. The hope we have was on full display when we were separated from God. How much more can we trust him now that we are right with him.

How does the knowledge of verses 6-8 help you to persevere through the "blues" you may have today? How does it help you acknowledge that God is not good just when things in our lives are good? He is always go

*If God saved us from our eternal damnation, how much more does he want to give us hope in our everyday sufferings. He doesn't promise to take away those sufferings, but promises to be with you in them and enable you to persevere.

Share an example of when you have persevered through a hardship and now you can look back and see the character you gained from it.

Share an example of when you have persevered through a hardship and what you learned about God's love for you because you persevered.

Use it: don't just learn the passage but use it.

We learned today that God is an "on-time God". What are things you need to share with the group to have them pray that you would persevere through, to wait on God's timing?

*Leader, after each person shares something, have someone in the group pray that very thing for them.

We also learned today that God is a "reaching out God." What are ways you have seen God reach out to you in your hardship that the group can celebrate with you?

*Leader, encourage the group to also share ways they've seen God reach out in a person's life in ways that the person may not be able to recognize.

Who are people that you are around that need to know Romans 5:1-8. Pray that God would reveal a time this week for you to share this passage with them.

As a practical application, encourage people to attend the Further Hope: Forgiveness seminar that started Monday, February 13 and will run 3 consecutive Mondays. Help them to see that this could be one of the ways God is reaching out to them.

Remember it: memorize a verse that helps you to remember and use it.

Memorize Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Write this on a piece of paper and put it on your mirror and in your car. Share this verse with your children to help them begin thinking about how God has loved us in the hardest of times! Begin now helping them see how God is our hope in our sufferings.