BIBLE STUDY

The Problems That Loom Large

RESONATE



Depression

Some issues are never addressed in the church. Yet, they are a reality that people face. One of these concerns is the topic of depression. Yet, the Word of God tackles this subject and we will learn how the answers relate to our lives.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

DAY 1

The Word

Today’s Scripture: Lamentations 3:1-26

Lamentations 3:1-20

1 I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. 2 He has driven me away
and made me walk in darkness rather than light; 3 indeed, he has turned his hand against
me again and again, all day long. 4 He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has
broken my bones. 5 He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship.
6 He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. 7 He has walled me in so I
cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains. 8 Even when I call out or cry for
help, he shuts out my prayer. 9 He has barred my way with blocks of stone; he has made
my paths crooked. 10 Like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding, 11 he dragged me from
the path and mangled me and left me without help. 12 He drew his bow and made me the
target for his arrows. 13 He pierced my heart with arrows from his quiver. 14 I became the
laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day long. 15 He has filled me
with bitter herbs and sated me with gall. 16 He has broken my teeth with gravel; he has
trampled me in the dust. 17 I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what
prosperity is. 18 So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD."
19 I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. 20 I well
remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. 21 Yet this I call to mind and
therefore I have hope: 22 Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his
compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24 I
say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." 25 The LORD is good
to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26 it is good to wait quietly for
the salvation of the LORD

Verse 1-20: These verses reflect the epitome of depression. It overtakes you. This writer is overwhelmed by his circumstances to the point of hopelessness. He feels attacked on every side. He does not see a way out. He thinks God has abandoned him. The key to this entire passage is found in verses 19-20. This man was reviewing all of his problems. The more he played back the old tape of his affliction, the more he felt depressed. His mind was focused on all the bad, which led to him feeling overwhelmed.

However, this writer decides to put in another tape.

Lamentations 3:22-26

21 Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: 22 Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24 I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." 25 The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26 it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD

Verse 21-26: This man chose to lift his eyes off his circumstances and place them on God. He renewed his hope by focusing on the truth that he knew about the Lord. He spoke truth to himself despite the fact that he did not feel it in his heart. He decided to believe the Word of God instead of his feelings. He reviewed the Word and spoke the Word and placed his faith in the One who wrote the Word. This takes decisive action to change the focus of your thoughts. However, it is a vital necessity in beginning the process of turning your feelings around.

Please realize that this is not an easy task. In the middle of your pain, it is not easy to change your thoughts. This is a battle. When you are depressed, it is hard sometimes to even make it through a normal daily routine, much less a new way of thinking. However, it is worth the effort for it will keep you from more emotional scars. Learning to refocus on the eternal God will help you make it through your painful yet temporal problems.

DAY 1

Application

Ask the Lord to show you what “tapes” you are playing in your head. Request His help in beginning to learn how to focus on Him.

When are you most vulnerable to slip into depression?

What links do you believe there are between the thoughts of a person and their emotional state?

How can you focus on truth instead of your problems when you are feeling depressed?

DAY 2

The Word

Today’s Scripture: Esther 4:1-2, 4-8

A drastic event can bring us to the door of depression in a moment’s notice. The report of bad news from a doctor, a phone call in the middle of the night, a police car arriving at your door and so many other terrible scenarios can leave your heart shattered, your mind scattered, and your life in shambles.

An entire nation heard news which led them to bitter tears.

Esther 3:13-14

> 13 Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. 14 A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day.

Verse 13-14: Due to an evil plot by a man named Haman, an edict was sent out to the entire kingdom to kill every Jew. How would you feel when you heard about this new law? They were captives in this nation. It was not as if they could just move to a new location. They were stuck. All they could do was wait for the day of their destruction. They had received the death sentence in a foreign land where they had no advocates. The Jewish people were overcome by sorrow and fear.

Esther 4:3

> 3 In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Their pain was overwhelming. They refused to eat. Their cries could be heard from a distance. They dressed themselves in uncomfortable clothes, to represent the torment of the heart. It was an outward sign of an inward pain. Ashes were thrown on the head as a sign of humility. In essence they were saying, “We are only made from dirt and to dirt we will return. We are insignificant”. They were showing their helplessness in the middle of this perilous situation.

One Jew who felt this distress was named Mordecai.

Esther 4:1-2

> 1 When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. 2 But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it.

Verse 1-2: Mordecai was the cousin of the queen of Babylon, Esther. However, no one knew about their relationship for Mordecai had told Esther to tell no one she was a Jew. Through a series of events, Esther replaced the former queen, Vashti. Yet, her Jewish heritage was kept secret from her husband. That is why Mordecai headed toward the king’s gate, to get near his cousin, Esther.

Esther 4:4-8

> 4 When Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. 5 Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why. 6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate. 7 Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. 8 He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

Verse 4-8: When Esther heard about her cousin’s pain, she did what often many of us do when someone is hurting, she tried to fix the immediate problem. He was dressed badly so she tried to give him new clothes. She did this without first finding out why he was in sackcloth and ashes. We often go about trying to “fix” the problems of others without understanding their need. Mordecai did not need fashion counsel; he needed someone to go to the king. Esther was able to truly help once she heard the issue.

Mordecai showed wisdom even in the midst of his depression. First, he went to a person who could help, namely Esther the queen. Then, he shared with her (through the eunuch Hathach) the reasons behind his downcast spirit. This is an example for us today. In our times of sorrow, we need to be willing to go to someone else and share our pain. This could be a friend, a pastor, a counselor, a mentor, a teacher. It just needs to be a trusted person who will recognize your hurt, be concerned about your broken heart, listen to you, and give you wise advice. This does not need to be someone who will just tell you what you want to hear. It should be someone who will speak to you truth in love. If this person can act on your behalf, they need to be willing to do so. Esther was willing to help Mordecai, herself, and her people.

The fate of the Jews turned around because of Esther’s wisdom. In fact the Jews conquered their enemies and Mordecai was given a position in the king’s court, second in command!

Mordecai, even in the midst of his depression, reached out for help. This act saved an entire nation.

DAY 2

Application

During our times of hardship, we may feel alone. God is with us and He has even given us one another to help each other during difficult times. Ask God to show you people in your life with whom you can entrust sharing your thoughts and feelings, even your deepest pain.

The Jewish culture is known for their demonstrative displays of emotion. In our culture, however, we keep our feelings to ourselves. How can we let others know how we feel since we do not have the habit of wearing sackcloth and ashes?

How can we stop “fixing” the problem and begin truly helping others?

How do we choose the person(s) with whom to share our pain?

DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Genesis 21:14-19

There are times that our hurts are so great that we want to run away. We do not know how to face our situation, so we avoid it at all cost. When there is no way out, no future, no hope, God can meet us even there.

A woman named Hagar felt the pain of impending death. Her sorrow, however, was not for herself but her son. It was her only son. The father of the boy had sent them out in the desert. She and her son were all alone.

Genesis 21:14-16

> 14 Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba. 15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob.

Verse 14-16: Some of the greatest pains come from watching the suffering of another. When you cannot help relieve their pain, especially of your child, you feel the most vulnerable, the most useless, the most alone. Who can describe the sorrow of a mother watching her son die? Hagar could not bear the torment. She did what she could by putting him in the protective covering of the bushes. But she had nothing else to give. She walked away, heartbroken, knowing the inevitable to come. She stayed close but could not bear to witness his slow torture of dehydration and death. The tears flowed easily.

Genesis 21:17

> 17 God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there."

Verse 17: What I find so amazing in this passage is that God called to Hagar even though Hagar had not called to God. The Lord met her in the midst of her pain. He did not say, "Well, she did not say the right words so I will not speak to her." She had done nothing but cry and God responded to those tears. When we are in our lowest moments, the Lord meets us there. He is not saying, "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps. Get over it." Instead, He is a tender

Father hearing the cries of his little girl.

God then asks Hagar, “What is the matter?” It is not that God does not know. It is a gentle reminder that you can tell God your pain. He is interested. He cares. Then, the Lord meets her deepest need by letting her know that He has heard the cries of her son.

If you are a parent, you are not the only one who hears the cries of your children. God hears them. He not only hears them, He is concerned for them. His concern was not like the concern of Hagar, who was helpless in meeting her son’s needs. Instead, his concern leads to helpful action.

Genesis 21:18-19

> 18 Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

Verse 18-19: God gives Hagar clear direction on what to do. Go to your son and take him by the hand. Lead him and guide him for the Lord has great plans for him. When Hagar was willing to step out in faith and do what God had told her to do, her eyes were open to salvation. The water was found in the desert. Life was restored to her son, as well as to herself.

In the midst of depression, we can barely see past the next minute much less years, even generations ahead. But God told Hagar to look past her pain into what He was going to do. She thought her son would die that day. God was going to make his descendants into a great nation. If we will allow God access to our pain, He will help us to see His plan in it. The desert was the catalyst for beginning a new nation. Where Hagar had seen only death, God could see future life. We need to allow God to speak to us in our pain.

But God did not only give Hagar a future hope, but He met her present need. He helped her find the water. He opened her eyes to see the answer she so desperately needed. The Lord will lead you into steps of recovering from your pain. But you must be willing to listen to His Word and allow Him to change your “eyesight”, the way you see your circumstances. Then, you can step out from sobbing to serving others the Living Water, the precious eternal life-saving gift of Jesus Christ.

DAY 3

Application

Spend time in praise of the Lord who meets us in our personal “deserts”.

What deserts have you walked through or maybe are walking through right now?

How does God speak to us in our times of depression?

What eternal purposes can be brought from our personal deserts?

DAY 4

The Word

Today’s Scripture: John 19:25, 20:1-2, 11-17

It is impossible to compare bad days. Our circumstances vary so much that we can not evaluate our response to them. One person may not be fazed by a problem that would crush another. We are all so different. But there is one woman’s grief that has spoken to people throughout the generations. We have so much to learn from the woman who watched the Son of God die.

John 19:25

> 25Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Verse 25: Mary Magdalene. She stood near the cross, would have seen the crown of thorns thrust through the skin on His head, the nail causing gaping holes in the wrists and feet, the swarming of flies and other insects to the blood. She would have heard the gasping of air, the groaning of pain, the statements made. The smell of blood would have permeated the air. His face was so battered that He would have been unrecognizable. Despite the grossness of this morbid scene, she stayed near the cross.

This was not just any man. This is the Man who loved her, who had saved her. We know from the Scriptures that Jesus had cast out seven demons from Mary Magdalene. He released her from all the torment and pain she had experienced. When others made her an outcast, God made her His child. With all He had done for her, she could do nothing to help Him. So she did the only thing she could, she stayed near Him in His death.

Who can describe the depths of her feelings? Who can imagine her pain? Who can recount all the questions running through her mind? She watched Him die. Her agony mounted. Her hope was gone.

Days later, she is still in her state of absolute sorrow. She returned to His tomb, the only place she knew to go.

John 20:1-2

> 1Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

Verse 1-2: To add to her sorrows, now the body of Jesus is gone. She had already seen His life robbed from Him and now she is experiencing His body being robbed from her. She had no idea who would be sick enough to steal a dead body, but all she knew was that He was gone. The confusion and pain reached a breaking point as she ran to the disciples and told them the news. She later returned to the tomb. She was now delirious with grief.

John 20:11-13

> 11but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.
>
> 13They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

Verse 11-13: Mary is so depressed that angels do not even bother her. In most places in Scripture, whenever someone saw an angel, they would be so frightened that the angel would say, “Do not fear”. Sometimes the person’s fear was so great that they would fall down as if they were dead! But Mary just simply looks at them and focused on the fact that where those angels are sitting is the place where Jesus’ body should be! So, instead of being told to “not fear”, Mary is asked, “Why are you crying?”

The angels knew the truth: Jesus is alive. They felt like the evidence was clear: stone rolled away, no body, angels sitting in the tomb. Even a bad detective could have put those pieces together. But Mary was hurting so bad that even the obvious was missed, even when she was looking the Evidence directly in the face!

John 20:14-17

> 14At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." 16Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

Verse 14-17: In her state of gloom, she could not see Jesus right there in front of her. With one word, though, it all changed. He called her by name. Are you suffering through a difficult time? Do you feel abandoned by God Himself? He has not left you. You may be missing the evidence of His Presence. But that does not mean you are all alone. He is with you even when you feel like you have been abandoned.

Mary, in her grief, gives us a model to handle our pain. She just kept trying to be near Jesus. At Calvary, she stood near the cross. After His death, she went to the tomb. Even seeing angels was not enough, she wanted to be around Jesus not the heavenly hosts! In your sorrow, when you do not know which way to go, when going through a normal routine seems beyond your ability, remember this: do whatever it takes to be near Jesus. With one Word, He can turn your grief into joy!

DAY 4

Application

Praise God that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is our hope during any time of sorrow that we may be facing in our lives today.

How can grief blind us from realizing the hope, the good, the potential in our lives?

What are ways we can choose to be near Jesus?

How does the reality of the Resurrection help us during times of sorrow?

How can we help others to see past the tears into the face of Jesus?

DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:21-30

It is time for being truthful. How many of us avoid depressed people? They are not easy to be around. Some of them refuse to walk out of grief into joy. However, some of us have refused to even try to walk with them. If you are one of those who thinks, "I'm not comfortable with other people's tears", let me tell you from the basis of the Word of God, "get over it". It is time for you to begin ministering to those around you and stop criticizing them. God deals with a whiny baby like you (by the way, we are all whiny babies when you think about it), so you can start dealing with the hurts of the people around you. We are called to do this.

1 Corinthians 12:25-27

> 25so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Verse 25-27: We are called to be concerned for one another. We are to hurt and rejoice with one another. Life is not meant to be lived alone, instead we are to help one another along the way.

A body is made up of many parts. Each part is important. If one piece does not function affectively then other parts of the body may be in danger as well. That is why one person's grief needs to be shared by others. All of us are called to help one another. It does not matter if you are not an emotional type person, a trained counselor, or a pastor, all that matters is that you respond to the need of the person near you.

How do you do that? If you are an analytical person, should you pretend to be the gooshy, emotional type? If you are a big soft teddy bear, should you pretend to be a strong shoulder for someone to cry on? The point of this passage is not we minister in our strengths or weaknesses, but instead by the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 12:27-30

> 28And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. 29Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

If you are in the body of Christ, then you have been given a spiritual gift. We are to know what our gift is and then let the Spirit work that gift through us in order to build up the body of Christ.

As the body of Christ, we need one another. Are you avoiding someone because they are too “needy”? God placed that person as well as you into the body of Christ. We need to be sensitive to one another. We need to realize that God gifted us to help one another. You help someone but then another person may help you. That is how the body functions together. We need each other.

1 Corinthians 12:21-25

> 21The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" 22On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

Verse21-25: We are to help one another. There are some weaker parts of the body. But realize that these parts are indispensable. They are not a burden but a value. We need to honor others and help them in their vulnerability. We need to encourage them, not slander them; help them, not ignore them; value them, not discard them; protect them, not victimize them.

If you know someone who is going through a difficult time, pray for that person. Ask God how He would call you to use your spiritual giftedness to help them. Do not abandon your brother or sister in his or her time in need. Instead, be the heart of God to them, showing them His eternal love.

DAY 5

Application

Thank God that He shows His concern for us. Ask for His help to show this same concern to others.

Why do we usually avoid helping others?

Why does God want us to show our concern for one another?

How can we help someone who is suffering in the grips of depression?

BIBLE STUDY

The Problems That Loom Large

RESONATE

Dollars

Money. It can be a necessity as well as an obsession. It can be used for good as well as evil. We can have it or it can have us. The lure of it is everywhere. This week we will learn God’s viewpoint on dealing with dollars.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

DAY 1

The Word

Today’s Scripture: Genesis 13:1-2, 5-12

Genesis 13:1-2

> 1 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. 2 Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

Verse 1-2: Abraham was very wealthy. As we begin this week, please realize that there is no sin in having plenty. The sin comes with how we deal with the material possession we do have.

Genesis 13:5

> 5 Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.

Verse 5: Lot was the nephew of Abraham. He, also, had many possessions. In our day and age, we do not associate animals with wealth. However, in this time and culture, the herds were their material possession. They represented food, clothing, and bartering currency. The reference to many tents means that Lot probably had many servants. This was another sign of being well-to-do. Lot and Abraham were both rich. However, contention arose due to their possessions. Interestingly enough, the fight was not between them.

Genesis 13:6-7

> 6 But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. 7 And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

Verse 6-7: They had so much stuff that the land could not support all the animals. The caretakers of the herds began arguing over “property rights”. The fighting was intense. Sadly, it was taking place in the land of the Canaanites and Perizzites. The pagan nations were witnessing the brand new chosen people of God fighting over land. In our desire for more, and in our pursuit of what is best for “us”, we can be a poor witness about the character of God to a watching world. If people without God in their lives, fight over what is best for them, then how were Abraham and Lot’s herdsmen proving that they were any different by knowing God. Thankfully, Abraham intervened.

Genesis 13:8-9

> 8 So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."

Verse 8-9: Abraham showed so much humility here. As the elder in the family, he could have bossed Lot around and told him to move on. Instead, Abraham allows Lot to choose his course and by default Abraham would go the other way. When we are dealing with dollars, our character and our humility should be considered more valuable than our material possessions. Sadly, Lot does not model this same attitude.

Genesis 13:10-12

> 10 Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11 So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: 12 Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.

Verse 10-12: Lot thought of himself. He looked to see what would benefit his interests. He did not care if Abraham would suffer or not. Instead, he just considered what would take care of himself. The lure of dollars is to make us think about what we want. We no longer care how it hurts others.

We want what we want and we want it now. Both Abraham and Lot were wealthy. Their attitudes toward it were completely different. Lot was willing to do whatever it takes to ensure his portfolio increased. Abraham, on the other hand, had learned that people were more important than possessions. Character was more valuable than cash. Humility was more profitable than herds. The wealth was not the sin. The reaction to material possessions is what could lead to our downfall.

DAY 1

Application

Confess anytime you may have looked out for your own material interest at the expense of someone else.

How do you feel about the statement that “wealth in itself is not a sin”?

In what ways can the way we deal with money matters, be a poor witness to unbelievers?

How do we often react like Lot?

What are examples of ways we can model Abraham in the way we deal with dollars?

DAY 2

The Word

Today’s Scripture: Matthew 6:19-24

Matthew 6:19-24

> 19"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 24"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Verse 19-24: These verses detail what our attitude should be towards wealth.

First of all, wealth should not be stored. This means to not hoard our wealth. It is fine for us to save in order to provide for our families in the future. That shows wisdom. However, to hoard your wealth is a greedy attitude of not wanting to give anything away to help others. It is to ignore the needs of others when you could easily help them to meet their needs. It is so focused on yourself that you miss opportunities to bless others.

Second, our wealth should never be our focus. We need to live for eternity. The way we spend our money should reflect the values of God. We should be more concerned about our eternal rewards received from our righteous actions on earth, then the money in our bank account.

Third, our eyes should be on God. When we look towards Him through the Word and prayer, we recognize how to use the material blessings God has given us in good ways. However, when we focus on the world, the darkness of coveting of things, jealousy of others, doing whatever it takes to get what we want, and other sins begins to take over. We become more and more like the darkness of the world instead of the Light to the world.

Fourth, we need to evaluate our hearts. Who do you love or serve: God or money? You can tell by your time, thoughts, and energy. Do you spend more time striving to get more things instead of serving God? Do you think about the stuff you want or about the ways of God? Do you give your all to what can make you money and then give God whatever energy you may have leftover? Think though what or Whom you truly love.

DAY 2

Application

We live in a material world that is obsessed with money and possessions. Ask God to help you recognize how this attitude has infiltrated your life. Ask for His light to shine in your darkness.

How do these verses conflict with everything we are taught in our culture?

What are ways we can stop storing treasures on earth and begin to store them in heaven?

How can we change our focus from the world to the eternal life?

How can we keep our hearts in check from straying from light to darkness?

DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Matthew 6:25-33

The having of wealth can potentially lead to sin. However, the lack of material possessions can also lead to sin. We must be aware of the pitfalls of both in order to steer our hearts from the danger.

Matthew 6:25-33

> 25"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Verse 25-33: These verses are in the context of the money verses that we studied yesterday. Jesus spoke about not treasuring the material possessions on earth. But now, He is addressing the worry from not having the wealth that we believe we need. When we do not have what we view as important, we can be led to the sin of worry.

We are told not to worry. It does not say worry about some things, or it is understandable if you worry some of the time. Instead, it says to never worry. In whatever situation you may be in, you are commanded to not fret, be upset, try to consider how to fix your problems, wonder aloud, wail, complain, in other words, to not worry. In fact, we are not to even worry about our life. That covers every situation we could possible come up with for a reason for worry.

We are not to be concerned with the necessities of life. It is not to be a source of fear. The very food and clothing we need is not to even bother us. The sad thing is, most of our worries are not even over necessities but over wants. Will we get to go on vacation? Will I be able to afford a better car? Should I buy a boat or a jet ski? If we are not to worry about our true

needs, how much more do these verses apply to the things we want out of life.

It comes down to focus. Will I turn my attention to what I do not have, or will I look towards what I do possess? For example, the fact that you are alive at this moment is more important than the fact that you may have some financial concerns. Another truth we must focus on is the power of God. If He is able to feed birds and clothe grass, then He is surely willing and able to help us. Please remember, these verses are written in context of our needs, not wants. Do not stretch this verse as a promise to meet your heart's desires. If you begin your focus on the fact that you have life, then your wants will melt away in the reality of being alive. We are to realize that God is able to provide for us and place our faith in Him. When we do, we will stop saying, "What is going to happen to me? Will is all work out?" and instead will devote my words, energy, and thoughts to thinking about the Lord. When I realize His gift of life, I appreciate what I have. When I realize His power, I believe He can provide. When I realize He is aware of my need, I can trust His love for me. When I focus on God, the worries of this world no longer matter.

DAY 3

Application

Spend time turning your focus from your “worries” to your God.

How do you usually deal with the material needs of your life?

What keeps us in a state of worry over our needs?

When we worry, what are we truly saying about God?

How can we turn from worry about our needs to trusting God with our needs?

DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:6-10, Hebrews 13:5

We live in a culture consumed by greed. We see commercials which tell us that we need more. We feel deprived if we do not have the latest in technology, cheated if we are not dressed in the current fashions, and downtrodden if our car is a later model. There is evidence of foolishness when we confuse wants and needs. However, what is the harm in wanting more? The Scripture shows us the danger of the lure of money.

1 Timothy 6:9-10

> 9People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Verse 9-10: The desire for riches leads to sins that can entrap us. Ruin and destruction awaits those whose sole pursuit in life is wealth. The love of money leads to different forms of evil. This is not just referring to the unbelievers in this world. For even Christians have wandered from the faith in order to pursue the material things of this world and it has led them to inflict pain upon themselves.

The seriousness of this matter needs to be fully realized by us. The pursuit of this world takes us from God and leads us to terrible places. It is not something to be taken lightly or to joke about. Often we minimize this sin and consider it to be not all that harmful. Yet, the Word of God shows the danger of the love of money. This love can grab a hold of anyone's heart: young and old, rich or poor, man or woman. We must realize the danger and guard our hearts. How do we do this?

1 Timothy 6:6-8

> 6But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Verse 6-8: Contentment is the key to protecting ourselves from the evils caused from loving money. We need to realize that what we have in this world is temporary. Everything of value here is worthless when we step into eternity. We need to be thankful for what we do have. If our needs are being met, then that is enough. We do not require anything more. When we

set our attention on what we have, compared to what we want, then we will find contentment.

Hebrews 13:5

> 5Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Verse 5: Another reason to stay clear from the love of money by living in contentment is it helps us to realize the true riches available to us. The wonderful fact about life is that God will never abandon us. In whatever circumstance we may face, we have all we need for the Lord is with us. Everything we try to gain by pursuing money can never compare to all we have with the Lord. Because God is with us, why would we spend our time, energy, and resources pursuing the far lesser things of this world?

When we pursue money, we become spiritual poor for our life is spent on the things of this world. Our spiritual poverty increases as our focus on money increases. We are drawn away from the Only One who can satisfy our hearts. For money and possessions can never fill the void in our hearts. When we purposely live in contentment, we will pursue God and discover the spiritual riches that eternally abound. He is more fascinating than the latest technology. His beauty marvels the latest fashions. His power can stir our soul more than a new car. He abundantly meets all the desires of our hearts. He is the fascination of the universe. Diamonds and gold pale in comparison to the Glory of the universe.

When we choose to turn away from the love of money, we will discover that the Lord never left us even when we left Him to go after the things of this world. What a difference from the world! It is always willing to leave behind the person who does not have the right clothes, the expensive house, the fancy toys, and all the other things of this world which are passing away. However, God will never leave you. You do not have to strive to fit into His group. You are accepted. Not only that, you have eternal wealth living within you! That wealth is yours forever.

DAY 4

Application

Confess any love you have for money. Ask God to free you from pursuing this world and to help you to pursue Him instead.

What sins can the love of money lead to?

How can the love of money lead a Christian to abandon his faith?

Why is contentment so important?

How do we live a contented life?

DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Mark 12:41-44

I remember sitting in a church staff meeting when the pastor brought up a large offering that a wealthy person would be giving on the following Sunday. I am not sure how he was aware of the money that would be coming in, but I do know that his reaction to it enraged me. He had decided to have this man stand in front of the church while the pastor shared the amount of money given so that everyone could celebrate this rich man's generosity. The following story came to mind as the pastor went on and on about the thousands of dollars that the man would be giving.

Mark 12:41-44

> 41Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. 43Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Verse 41-44: Many pastors often place themselves in view of seeing what people give. They do this in order to buddy up to the rich, the big givers. This is far from the example of Christ. He was watching but was unimpressed by the gifts of the wealthy. Instead, his eyes zeroed in on a woman, shabbily dressed, all alone who put in so little that it could buy nothing at the market. This would be someone whom most preachers would pass by. But not Jesus.

The Lord's voice is heard above the crowd. He is calling Him disciples to come over to Him. They rush over, wondering what Jesus wants to share with them. What does God Almighty want to tell them? He points to a woman. A poor widow is singled out from the rest of the crowd. I wonder if the disciples were shocked. They were in the middle of the rich people throwing in money to the temple treasury. Yet, this woman was a complete nobody. Why would Jesus want them to look at her? They would much rather adore the popular and prosperous. This woman was a nobody by the world's economic system. Yet, God Himself points to her and gives her a compliment that still resounds in Scripture today.

The woman who gave less than a penny gave more than anyone. Jesus did not evaluate the size of the gift, but the size of the heart. She gave all she had to the Lord. She counted her life as less important than giving to God. She could have justified by not giving saying she needed to buy food. It would be true. But this woman's heart was so in tune with God that

she would rather give to Him, to His work, to His kingdom, than to give to herself.

How much are we willing to give to God? Do we give anything to His kingdom's work through the church? Is our priority to buy all we want first and then give to the Lord what is leftover? If we do give, do we feel good that others know we tithe? Is it all for show? Or do we actually think God should be grateful and commend us for giving to Him? Sadly, that is often our attitude.

This poor woman shows us the true model of giving. For one, it should be a priority. I know some of you are thinking, "There they go, always trying to get money for the church." On behalf of church staff's everywhere, let me apologize for all the ministers who are about money. There are some pastors who are money hungry. They are in sin and they will be held accountable for God for their evil. However, when I say giving should be a priority, I am not concerned about the money. God is the provider and sustainer of all needs. He owns everything. His church is not a beggar hoping for leftovers. The giving is for our spiritual good. It reminds us that the money is not truly ours, but God's. It is an opportunity to thank God for the gifts He has given us. It is a partnership with others in the kingdom of God who are taking the gospel throughout the world. It is the ability to help those who are suffering. It is obedience to God.

Besides the priority of giving, there is the posture of giving. She was humble. However, the wealthy were not. They were showing off their funds to all who was willing to see. "Look how spiritual I am as I give money to God." The Lord was sitting right there and He was not impressed. When we give, we are to be humble.

When we make giving a priority and we have the posture of humility in giving, then we will receive the honor of the praise of giving. Jesus commends this widow. He praises her in front of all His disciples. For thousands of years, this woman has been set before us as an example. What a compliment from Almighty God! When we give, God Himself is pleased. And He brags on you and will one day reward you for your faithfulness to Him. And that, my friend, is worth more than all the money on earth!

DAY 5

Application

Evaluate your giving in light of the truth of God’s Word.

How is your attitude toward giving?

How can giving become a priority in your life?

Do you believe that your giving would please God? If not, how can that be changed?

In light of all we have learned this week, how have you been convicted about your dealings with the dollars in your life?

BIBLE STUDY

The Problems That Loom Large

RESONATE



Disappointment

There are some problems which seem to loom out at us. They encompass our emotions and thoughts. We seem unable to get away from the grip they have on our lives. This week we will honestly address one of these issues, which is the disappointment that comes into our lives. We look to the Word of God on how to deal with it.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13, 18, 23-28; 39:2, 45:4-8

Have you ever been disappointed by other people? Did a parent break a promise? Did a friend use you? Was a teacher discouraging? Did your brothers sell you into slavery? No, you weren't sold into slavery? Well, let's discuss someone who experienced their share of sibling rivalry. His name is Joseph.

Joseph was one of twelve sons of Jacob, also known as Israel. And he was the favorite. Jacob adored this one special son and his brothers knew it and they weren't happy.

Genesis 37:3-4

> 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Verse 3-4: Imagine how lonely it was for Joseph. He was hated by his brothers. They were never nice to him. They could not even fake it. Whenever they spoke a word to him, it was just cruel. Joseph was disappointed in his family dynamics. And it was to get even worse.

Genesis 37:12-13, 18, 23-28

> 12 Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, 13 and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied… 18 But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him… 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing- 24 and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. 25 As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt. 26 Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? 27 Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. 28 So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

Verse 18-24: Joseph was hated so much that his own brothers plotted to kill him. Can you imagine the shock when his own flesh and blood attacked him? Their words were probably as vicious as their actions. He probably had bruises not only on his body but on his heart as well. His pain probably rose in terror as he is thrown without mercy into a well. Joseph was probably screaming for help while his brothers callously sat down for a meal.

Verse 25-28: Judah in complete wickedness proclaims that to just kill his brother would be foolish. He would rather make money off of him. Then he justifies it with, “Well, guys, he is our bro and all. Let’s not actually kill him but just make him a slave for life.” Oh, how “kind” of them.

I wonder if Joseph thought the cruelness of his brothers was over when they began to lift him out of the well. Did he think that maybe they would apologize? How did it feel to be brought out of the pit only to be shackled as a slave? He was probably pleading with his brothers and they just ignored his cries. This seventeen year old kid watched as his kin received money for his life. He is bound and taken away. How would you feel?

To say the very least, Joseph was disappointed in his family. He was the victim of their jealousy, their anger, their violence, their deceit, their greed, their evil. He was now taken to a foreign land with a strange language and different customs.

How would you have handled this disappointment? What would you do? May Joseph inspire all of us. This teenager depended on the only family he still had, His Heavenly Father.

Genesis 39:2

> 2 The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.

Verse 2: Joseph recognized the fact that he was not alone. He knew that God was with him. Joseph worked hard in the circumstance he found himself and saw the Lord at work in his life. Despite his age, despite his past, despite his victimization, despite circumstances, despite his family, Joseph pressed on. Joseph did not stay focused on what he had lost: his freedom, his family, his father, his friends, his future; instead, he focused on what he had: the Lord. This not only enabled him to face the disappointment of his family but also to forgive it.

Through a series of divine circumstances, Joseph became second in charge of all of Egypt. Due to a severe famine, his own brothers came to Egypt to buy food. They had no idea who they were asking for help, the same brother whose cries for help they had ignored over two decades before.

Genesis 45:4-8

> 4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! 5 And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. 6 For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. 7 But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt..."

Verse 4-8: Joseph allowed God to take his disappointment and see it through divine eyes. He recognized that the Lord was in control and in His sovereign will allowed the evil actions of the brothers to be used ultimately for good.

I do not know how your family has let you down. Some of you may have serious pain from your past or it may possibly be ongoing. Bring the disappointment to the Lord. Allow Him to work the situation for good. It may take years, but at some point you will see His glory.

DAY 1

Application

Be honest before God and share with Him any disappointments you have in your life.

How can we go from disappointment in our family to forgiveness?

What do you think brought Joseph to the point of believing that ultimately God had sent him to Egypt not his brothers? How can we achieve this same perspective in our disappointments?

DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Ruth 1:1-5, 8-9, 14-18, 19-21; 4:13-17

Have you ever had a bad day? What about a bad week, or month, or year? Then, you know what it feels like to be disappointed in your circumstances. Sometimes, the events of our lives can be overwhelming.

Ruth 1:1-5

> 1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. 3 Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

Verse 1-5: A famine had invaded Judah. In hopes for a better life, this family moved to the pagan country of Moab. In the course of time, Naomi's husband died. She is alone in a foreign land with her two sons. Eventually, they marry Moabite women but after a time, these two sons also die.

Imagine the heartache. Your family is all dead. You are far from home. You are in a land which does not have the same spiritual beliefs as you. You are literally all alone. Life was a disappointment to Naomi. What began as a journey to save her family led to their demise. The dreams she had for her sons were shattered. Her hope was gone.

In the midst of her heartbreak, she heard some good news which would change her life's course forever.

Ruth 1:6-9

6 When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. 8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. 9 May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them and they wept aloud… 14 At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth clung to her. 15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." 16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Verse 6-9: In the midst of her disappointment at her circumstances, Naomi was still sensitive to the work of the Lord. She realized His sovereignty. She acknowledged Him as powerful to help those in need. She reminded herself that she was a part of His people, His child. She was willing to move herself into His protective care by returning back to her homeland.

This was a difficult decision. Travel was not easy during those days. Not only was the journey difficult but unsafe as well, especially for a woman. Naomi gathered up courage and chose to make steps in a direction that would help her. In her sadness, it would have been easier to stay where she was and wallowed in her pain. Instead, Naomi realized that she had a choice whether to move forward or not. With great difficulty, Naomi decided to return home.

Ruth 1:8-9, 14-18

8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. 9 May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them and they wept aloud… 14 At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth clung to her. 15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." 16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Verse 8-9: Naomi was in the middle of deep pain. Her husband and sons had all died. She was beginning to embark on a very difficult journey. Her future was uncertain. Many of us in a similar situation may have reacted with selfishness, believing the world should revolve around us. Yet, Naomi chose to focus on others. She entreated her daughter-in-laws to return to Moab. She wished them future happiness and showed her love and concern for them through her tears. Naomi, in the middle of life's disappointments, focused on others.

Verse 14-18: Orpah returned to Moab and we never hear about her again. Ruth, however, decided to go with Naomi. At first, Naomi tried to discourage her but then realized Ruth's determination. Naomi allowed this young woman to be a part of her life. For in this act, Ruth was forsaking her family and claiming Naomi as her mother.

Sometimes when we are in our pain, we just want to be all alone. We quit speaking to family and we stop returning our friends' phone calls. We just want to be miserable all by ourselves. However, Naomi recognized the love of Ruth and was willing to take her as her own. Even deep in pain, Naomi was willing to receive the shows of love by others and to respond in love as well. Together, Naomi and Ruth journeyed home.

Ruth 1:19-21

> 19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?" 20 "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. 21 I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

Verse 19-21: Naomi's name meant "pleasant". But due to her circumstances, she felt more like "Mara" which means "bitter". Life had been bitter for Naomi. And she was upset about it.

What I love about Naomi is that she was honest about her feelings. We live in a culture with plastic smiles and the constant answer of "fine" to the question of "how are you?". We keep up the image as best we can. Naomi dealt honestly and openly about her struggles. She recognized that God could have prevented her pain, yet He did not. However, she knew that she had changed in the circumstances, going from pleasant to bitter. In her hurt and pain and even her anger at God, she knew that she had made the choice to be changed by the events in her life.

While Naomi's pain did not change, her husband and sons were gone, she did choose to find joy in the circumstances of others.

Ruth 4:13-17

13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. 14 The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! 15 He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth." 16 Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him. 17 The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Verse 13-17: What has taken place? Ruth has fallen in love. She marries Boaz. They have a baby. What does Naomi do? She does not complain that Ruth has a new husband while she does not. She does not cry that Ruth now has a son while her sons are dead. She does not try to destroy the happiness of Ruth. Instead, Naomi shares in the joy. She decides to use her talents as a mom who raised two sons, to help a brand new mom out. She adored her grandson by her adopted daughter. She did not fret about him not being her son’s son. Instead, she enjoyed the family that God chose to give her. Her past circumstances had not changed, but she determined to live fully in her present situation. That is how Naomi went from Mara to Naomi once again.

DAY 2

Application

God is still with us even during our times of pain. Naomi did not recognize fully all that He was accomplishing in her life. Yet, she rediscovered the joy in the end. Ask God to help you to trust Him even during life's darkest hours.

How did you feel when Naomi blamed God for her life's situation?

What can we learn from the ways Naomi dealt with her disappointment?

How can we be like Ruth to someone facing difficult circumstances?

DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: 2 Samuel 11:1-5; 12:7-10, 13-14, 18-20

The biggest disappointments in my life have been in me. Maybe you can relate. I have walked down roads that I have regretted; I have burned bridges that I desperately wish I could cross; I have wounded others deeply; I have caused needless suffering upon myself. What do we do with the self-inflicted disappointments? What do we do when the only one to blame is looking back at you in the mirror? Do you ever think back on a moment in time and wish "if only I had made a different decision." There is one man's "if only" detailed out in Scripture. Before the disappointment, there was a choice. And he made the wrong one.

2 Samuel 11:1-5

> 1 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. 2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, 3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home. 5 The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

Verse 1-5: This is sadly one of the more famous scandals of the Bible. David commits adultery. His sin suddenly multiplies as he then tries to get Bathsheba's husband, named Uriah, to sleep with her so everyone would believe it was his child. When that plan did not work, he had Uriah killed. Then, he took Bathsheba to be his wife. In a short amount of time, David the King became David the Killer. He had spiraled downward so far that he was hardly recognizable. David called "a man after God's own heart" had committed such heinous crimes that under the law, he could be rightfully put to death.

After the child was born, the Lord sent a prophet named Nathan to confront David.

2 Samuel 12:7-10

> 7 Then Nathan said to David, "...This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. 9 Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

Verse 7-10: David was confronted with the ugliness of his sin. He realized all that he had done. There was no denial of his past now. He was being looked at directly by Nathan, the prophet of God. He felt as if the Lord was piercing his very heart. What David does next, gives us an example of what we are to do when we face the disappointments of ourselves. First, he confesses his sin.

2 Samuel 12:13a

> 13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

Second, he takes by faith the forgiveness of the sin.

2 Samuel 12:13b

> Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.

Third, David recognized the consequences of his sin.

2 Samuel 12:14

> 14 But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die."

Fourth, David prays that the consequences be removed, if it is the Lord’s will.

2 Samuel 12:14

> 15 After Nathan had gone home, the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife had borne to David, and he became ill. 16 David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground. 17 The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them.

Fifth, David accepts the will of the Lord, even though it meant enduring the consequences of his sin.

2 Samuel 12:18-20a

> 18 On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, we spoke to David but he would not listen to us. How can we tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate." 19 David noticed that his servants were whispering among themselves and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied, "he is dead." 20 Then David got up from the ground.

Sixth, David worshipped God.

2 Samuel 12:20b

> After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped.

Seventh, David went about his usual routine.

2 Samuel 12:20c

> Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

David disappointed himself. Yet, he did not wallow in self degradation. Instead, he put himself on track to being in the Lord’s will. The journey was not easy. The consequences were devastating. But David knew it was the only way to climb his way out of the pit of disappointment that he had dug himself.

DAY 3

Application

If you have disappointed yourself, ask God to help you go through these steps below.

Confess your sin to God.

Write a prayer of thanksgiving for the forgiveness you have just received.

Analyze the possible consequences you may experience or have experienced because of the sin.

Ask God to remove the consequences of your sin. But if He will not, ask God to help you accept His will in the matter.

Worship God.

Establish how you will go about your usual routine.

Now that you have gone through these steps, you can help others walk this journey as well.

DAY 4

The Word

Today’s Scripture: Daniel 1:1-17

Daniel 1:1-7

> 1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon
> came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into
> his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to
> the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god. 3 Then the
> king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from
> the royal family and the nobility- 4 young men without any physical defect, handsome,
> showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and
> qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature
> of the Babylonians. 5 The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the
> king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the
> king's service. 6 Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and
> Azariah. 7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to
> Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

Verse 1-7: Do you think there was some disappointment in government affairs? These Jews experienced the downfall of their beloved nation. As if the trauma of war and the military loss was not enough, their religious center, the temple, was desecrated by the Babylonian army. Then, young men were removed from their families and forced to enter the ranks of this pagan king. I would think the word “disappointment” is an understatement.

How did one group of men respond? They took control of what they could.

Daniel 1:8a

> 8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine…

Verse 8-10: Daniel could not change the fact that his nation had lost a war. He could not keep the Babylonian government from taking him captive. However, he could choose to keep his values despite the oppressing pressure. Daniel did not want to be defiled by the food. This refers to spiritual defilement for he knew that the food was sacrificed to the gods of Babylon. To eat this food would be agreeing with this practice. He believed it would defile him and his beliefs to partake in the meal. In his spirit and in good conscience, he made the choice to protect his religious beliefs. However, he was not desirous of going on a hunger strike. In order to resolve this dilemma, he humbled himself to the authority placed over him.

Daniel 1:8-10

> 8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, 10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

Verse 8-10: David had built a relationship with this man. It is evident from the passage for the chief official favored Daniel. The Lord ultimately let this occur, but in addition to this, Daniel was a man who could be favored. If Daniel was arrogant, angry, or annoying this official would not like him so much. Instead, Daniel recognized him as an authority and treated him with proper respect. Despite his disappointment in being forced into this situation, Daniel did not heap abuse onto others. Instead, he was an example that shined in difficult circumstances, so much so that even his enemy became his friend.

Daniel 1:11-14

> 11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." 14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

Verse 11-14: Daniel did not pout or whine or complain. Instead, he showed calmness and wisdom in this situation. His reaction led the official to agree with his request.

Daniel 1:15-17

> 15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. 16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. 17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

Verse 15-17: God blessed these men because they stood firm in their convictions and beliefs. They allowed the Sovereign God of the universe to control situations which were out of their control. Yes, they were let down by the governmental authority that they were now subjected to. However, they recognized the ultimate authority belonged to the Lord. By honoring Him in disappointing times, they received the blessings of God!

DAY 4

Application

Praise God for His sovereign power over every earthly authority.

What ways do we usually respond when we are disappointed in the authorities placed over us?

When we are disappointed in the authority placed over us (parental, work, or even government), how should we respond?

When we are in the middle of disappointment how can we decide which beliefs or opinions will we take a stand for and which will we just let go and not address?

How can we appropriately bring our beliefs or opinions to the attention of the authorities?

DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Habakkuk 1:2-4, 5-6, 12-17; 2:1-3. 8; 3:17-19

Today, we are going to discuss a disappointment that is rarely mentioned. Yet, if we were all honest, we have battled it at some point in our lives. Let us let down our guard and talk about being disappointed in God.

"Blasphemy," some may yell. Yet, I just think they are not being honest. For the pages of Scripture reveal this feeling in people's lives. They were honest enough to share about it so that we may learn how to deal with it.

Habakkuk 1:2-4

> 2 How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? 3 Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. 4 Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

Verse 2-4: Habakkuk was a prophet, a minister, of God. How could he question the Lord? Yet, look at his complaint against God. He feels like he prays and prays and nothing happens. He looks around at the evil around him and accuses God of doing nothing. He even lets God know the consequences of His "inaction". Habakkuk is disappointed in God and he lets the Lord know it.

How does God react? Is He mad? No, He answers the honest prayer.

Habakkuk 1:5-6

> 5 "Look at the nations and watch— and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. 6 I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own.

Verse 5-6: Habakkuk was disappointed in the fact that God was not dealing with the treachery of Israel. God answers his prayer by allowing Habakkuk to know that He will judge the Jews and His wrath will be shown by allowing the nation of Babylon to conquer the chosen nation of Israel.

This answer, however, did not please Habakkuk. He is disappointed in God's answer and once again shares His opinion with the Lord.

Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

> 12 O LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, we will not die. O LORD, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish. 13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous?
>
> Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? 14 You have made men like fish in the sea, like sea creatures that have no ruler. 15 The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. 16 Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food. 17 Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy? 1 I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

Verse 12-17: Habakkuk does not understand why God would allow the evil and wicked and pagan nation of Babylon to conquer Israel. It was true that Israel had strayed from God but their sins seemed righteous compared to the land of Babylon. This kingdom was mercilessly conquering nations and worshipping their military prowess and skill. Habakkuk is upset about the thought of these cruel and godless people conquering the Jews. After he voices his complaint, he listens to the answer of God.

Habakkuk 2:2-3, 8

> 2 Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. 3 For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay…
>
> 8 Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you.
>
> For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.

Verse 2-3, 8: The Lord answered Habakkuk's complaint. He let the prophet know that an answer would come to pass in God's perfect timing. The revelation was that Babylon will be destroyed just as she destroyed others. Habakkuk was disappointed because he did not understand the entire plan of God. Now, that God had answered his cries, this prophet had a new viewpoint of events that he could not comprehend.

Habakkuk 3:17-19

> 17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. 19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights. For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.

Verse 17-19: Disappointments in life will come. We may not understand why God did not prevent them since He was able to do so. However, we can choose to focus on the circumstances that we do not fully grasp, which only leads to bitterness. Or we can find joy, strength, endurance in the Lord. One leads to complaining against God for the mountainous problem before us, the other leads us to scaling the mountain to see a tremendous view. The choice is ours.

DAY 5

Application

Ask God to show you where you may feel disappointment in Him. Be honest with him about your thoughts and feelings. He already knows all about it, this is helpful for you.

Why is the topic of our disappointment with God rarely discussed?

How can denying our feelings of disappointment be harmful to ourselves as well as to others?

How can sharing the truth of our thoughts be beneficial for both ourselves and others?

What are reasons that we may feel disappointed in God?

How can we go from disappointment in God to joy in the Lord?