

FOCUS DEEPE

LEADER GUIDE // WEEK 5

Series Big Idea

The greatest priority in the life of a Christian should be to develop a deeper relationship with God.

Message Big Idea

Suffering is a critical element in the development of a deepening relationship with God.

Scripture

Romans 8:18-30

Ice Breaker & Opening Thought

Read this quote to your group. Oswald Chambers, in his classic book entitled *My Utmost for His Highest*, writes "The nature of the spiritual life is that we are certain in our uncertainty." He describes this as "gracious uncertainty," where "we are uncertain of the next step, but we are certain of God." We could add that we can be certain of God's grace while being graciously uncertain of the future details of our lives. With gracious uncertainty, we can be confident in our expectations, knowing our hope in the Lord will not disappoint (Romans 5:5). With gracious uncertainty, we can release the things we have no responsibility for, yet worry about anyway. The key verse this past week was Roman 8:28 - "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." It says "in ALL things." This includes suffering, difficult people, setbacks, tragedy, failure, bad choices, and even sin. If only we all had such faith to believe Romans 8:28, no longer requiring God to submit to our clocks and calendars. Our objective-in-Jesus is to grow confident each day that our heavenly Father will come through for us at just the right time in just the right way. Have you ever experienced a time when God came through for you? (Some of this dialog was adapted from a writing by Jon Walker) Ask your group to share their thoughts/emotions regarding this reading.

Bible Discussion: Romans 8:18-30

There were five apps drawn from Romans 8 in the message. Suffering - 1) develops spiritual surrender; 2) refocuses of what matters most in life; 3) recalibrates contentment and gratitude; 4) forces theological analysis (unfortunately usually wrong understanding of God and how God operates; and 5) leads to an otherwise unimagined you. When you have suffered, or struggled through a crisis, which of these five have you experienced?

Life Application

"The entire story of humanity is a story of people who have stumbled and fallen, yet somehow in this ocean of God's grace and mercy, He provides a comeback for anyone who puts their faith and hope in Jesus. In the end, we find that no matter what we might be walking through - including suffering - we can still have confidence that Jesus is the God of the comeback and that our story is not over as long as Jesus is in it." (adapted from Louie Giglio) Again, ask for responses to this from your group.

Challenge

Suffering is part of how we grow. It is the one part that we have little control over. Knowing that God can truly use it to make us better, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 not good and 5 being totally open) what would you rate your response to God's tools for growth? What would it take to move it 1 point better?

***Special note:** Life Groups often meet bi-weekly. If this is your group's case, get creative in still making sure each person still does the FOCUS study outside of Life Group on your off week. For example: If you don't meet as a Life Group until next week, do the study with a friend, spouse, or family member this week.