

## **Week 5 – Weakness**

**Big idea: we all have periods when we have doubts and all go through times of sadness and loss. But as Christians we can bring all these to God and know that He will use these times of ‘weakness’ so that we flourish and not wither.**

*[While we touch on it, this is not a study on how to deal with grief and, if there is anyone with a current issue, encourage them to seek help from the pastors or professional support if they need it]*

### **FORMING CONNECTIONS**

Share any lessons from last week from any actions you took to grow or share or care for others.

Share among the group how their birth families dealt with loss, death or sadness. How were these things discussed? Were you told you need to be ‘strong’? Were children shielded from these issues? What are some ways that people you know have responded to loss?

### **BIBLE STUDY**

#### **1. QUESTIONS AND DOUBTS**

Jesus’ disciples asked him over 180 questions in the gospels! Many were ‘why’ questions, others were ‘when will you ...’ Questions are vital in growing and Jesus never criticised them for asking.

**READ some or all of Psalm 77:1-15, Psalm 13:1-5, Psalm 73:1-4, 13-16, 23-28**

What were the 2 things the people in the psalms were dealing with? (a particular problem and then God not answering)

How did the psalmist in Ps 77 stop himself sliding into despair (verses 10-15)?

What is the difference between questioning and doubt?

What are things that cause us to doubt? Is doubt bad or sinful?

What remedies did the psalmists find (see e.g. Psalm 13:5). How can we do that too?

Ask if anyone in the group would like to share a question about faith that has been bothering them, maybe for years? How can we deal with questions and doubts?

#### **2. GRIEF AND LOSS**

Grief and loss are unavoidable in life and sometimes can be crushing. It can seem that no one on earth could possibly understand the depths of your pain. In times like these, it helps to remember God is there, and He's ready to shoulder your burdens, suffering, and distress.

**READ: Ps 6:1-6, Ps 10:1, John 20:1-18**

For whatever reason, many Christians have the idea that happiness honours God and sadness constitutes spiritual failure. They think sadness tarnishes their witness. In reality, we see intense expressions of lamentation and grief throughout the Bible. The laments of the Psalms, the expressions of Job, the outrage of Jeremiah, and the questions of Habakkuk provide ample evidence of holy grief before God. Jesus grieves the death of Lazarus. There is no shame in mourning your loss with a heart full of sadness.

**READ Psalm 6:1-6 and Psalm 10:1** – what stage of grief were the psalmists in? Where did they go from there?

**READ John 20:11-18** – how was Mary dealing with her grief? What did she find?

**READ Matt 11:28, Romans 8:28** – is there a distinctive way for Christians to deal with grief and loss?

The way of the cross shows that pain often precedes healing and restoration. God will give you the grace you need not to be overwhelmed by sadness.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Dealing with these issues is an essential part of growing in discipleship – admitting our issues to God, trusting Him so that we can rediscover His love for us and supporting others in their journeys.

**PERSONAL REFLECTION - – EITHER TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO REFLECT OR DO IT DURING THE WEEK**

Have you felt able to be honest with God about your doubts, fears, grief and loss? If not spend some time this week bringing these things before God. Meditate on some of the psalms we have read and ask God for his revelation.

## **ACTION**

What needs to happen in the group for people to be able to share their genuine doubts or sadnesses? How can you support each other better?

Encourage people, perhaps in pairs, to pray for each other during the week, maybe just through a quick call.