

The Backwards Way

Week 2 | Your Pain Is Your Platform

■ BOTTOM LINE

The pain in our life can lead us to our purpose in life. God can transform our pain and give us a platform to use the redeemed pain to serve others in His Kingdom.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

As a group, discuss and identify ways God can use pain in someone's life to transform someone else life.

■ SCRIPTURE

John 4:5-42: The scripture in the book of John is called The Woman at the Well. This is where Jesus meets this Samaritan woman who was thirsty and looking for a drink of water. In the course of this interaction, He reveals to her a true need which then prompts her to go and share her story with many people which had a life changing impact on them.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10: In 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul talks about gaining power through our weaknesses. This is contrary to what the world says about power and weakness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share:** Wounded people often wound others and people healed by Christ can help others heal. Think of a time in your life when you helped someone because of pain in your life or someone helped you by sharing their pain. Describe your experience with the group.
- Read John 4:5-42 and Discuss:** The Samaritan woman goes to the well for water to quench her thirst, but to her surprise something else happened - she discovered her real need and a solution to her problems. Has there ever been a time in your life, when you searched for a solution to a problem only to find that the solution you pursued did fix your problem?
 - The Samaritan woman thought of herself poorly but Jesus treated her with honor and dignity. Reflect on a time in your own life when you looked at yourself in a way that caused you pain. Perhaps you felt you were not enough or needed something more to complete you. Share what comes to mind.
 - Jesus tells the Samaritan woman about a "living water" where anyone who drinks of the water will never be thirsty again. What do you think is this "living water" that Jesus is referring to? In what areas of your life are you still thirsty and needing "living water"?
- Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 and Discuss.** The Apostle Paul refers to a thorn (pain) in his life and asks the Lord to take it away. Is there currently a "thorn" in your life you wish God would take away?
 - Paul goes on to say that he is "content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ..." This is contrary to how the world views weaknesses. How does this challenge your view of sharing your weaknesses and troubles with others?
 - What do you think was revealed to Paul through his pain and troubles? Do you know someone who is content about their pain or trouble?
 - Pain can give us the ability to serve others. It gives credibility to our voice and connects us to others on common human ground. It provides a fellowship that binds us and breaks people open for the flow of living water. How can we live this out as individuals and/or a small group?
- Pain can be power, but too often our failures of the past hold us back from the incredible journey God calls us to. Lies fill our heads and turn our doubts into fears. We hear about living life to the fullest, but strongholds (seen and unseen) can keep us on the sidelines. When we confess our misconceptions of God, we can begin healing. When we embrace our pain, God can use it as a platform to reach others. What do you feel God is revealing to you through these scriptures and what do you sense Him telling you to do about it?

"Our pain becomes the scars for people to see the healing power of our great God. Not only does He heal; He transforms what could have destroyed us."

David Gibbons



TRY THIS

This next week, take time to search your heart and identify a pain that needs healing. Ask God for healing and to use it for good. Ask Him to place you in the path of someone going through pain and in need of healing. Come back the next week and start group discussion by sharing your experience.

The Backwards Way

Week 1 | Pride

■ BOTTOM LINE

The church, the people of God, were not meant to huddle up and stay in one place, building their own kingdom. God's people are designed to scatter all over the world bringing the Good News to all people.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

As a group, discuss and identify what holds individuals and groups back from being the church outside the building.

■ SCRIPTURE

Genesis 11:1-9 and Matthew 28:16-20: The Genesis scripture is the story of the Tower of Babel where God confused His people with different languages causing them to scatter around the world. The Matthew scripture is called "The Great Commission" because Jesus tells His twelve disciples to go into all the world and make disciples of all the nations.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** Psychologists say that people deal with fear by avoidance. Human beings by nature want to stick close to like-minded people. Think of a time in your life when you fell into a place of avoidance. Describe the situation to the group. How did you feel?
2. **Read Genesis 11:1-9 and Discuss.** The decision to build the tower by the people of Babel is a decision to separate themselves from others. What would it really be like if we all looked the same and spoke the same language?
 - a. Encountering diversity can make us uncomfortable and expose our deficiencies. When we're in an unfamiliar environment, we don't feel as smart or competent and in control. Do you agree? Why or why not?
 - b. Do you think God used His decision to "confuse their language so they do not understand one another's speech" to make the people uncomfortable? In what ways does the Tower of Babel represent the "personal kingdoms" we each build on a daily basis?
3. **Read Matthew 28:16-20.** Often our human plan is rooted in human power, pride and self-promotion, but God's plan is rooted in sacrificial love. He desires for us to be representatives of the Kingdom of God and go out into the world to sacrificially serve others, even those different than us. How else could you describe God's plan?
 - a. In the book "Small Cloud Rising" Dave Gibbons asks the question "What would the church look like if it wasn't contained on a piece of land?" How do you answer that question?
 - b. Dave Gibbons dreams about a church "like clouds freed to roam and bless the earth". How can we as a small group live this out and challenge each other to be a "small cloud"?

"Imagine if each person knew their gifts, identity, pain and the people they were called to and became the church outside of just the Sunday gathering." David Gibbons



TRY THIS

Each day for the next week, start your morning in prayer. Ask God what He is saying to you through this message and how you are to respond. Ask Him to place you in the path of someone who needs to feel the love of Jesus. Come back the next week and start the group discussion by sharing your experiences.