

Meeting the Ups and Downs of Life – Week 3

Wrap up Lesson 1 – Struggles with Needs and Expectations

We ended last week with a discussion about God’s relationship with evil—he is not the author of it, nor does he bear any responsibility for evil things. He allows them to happen and uses evil to test and strengthen us as his children. Perhaps the most famous biblical account of this happening is Job.

1. In response to the tests God famously gave him, Job questioned God. In **Job 40:1-14**, God responds to Job. What humbling message did God give Job?
 - a. In what ways is this a humbling (yet very important) reminder for us?

2. A person might have faith in God's eternal promise of heaven and yet still feel that for this life God is not meeting his expectations. Why is it sometimes easier for us to believe that God is in control in matters that pertain to eternal life than that he is in control of our future here on earth?

3. Some people might say that the message of Jesus dying for sin is so basic that we hardly need to mention it (“I know how the story ends.”). Or at least, they fail to see the comprehensive nature of Jesus dying on the cross—it applies to every situation, including Shawn’s. For what reasons is it important to talk to Shawn about the seriousness of sin and the blessing of forgiveness?

Application

It is a challenge to pray for God to bless us in specific ways if we do not always know if our expectations agree with God’s will for us. Along with the ACTS model (Adoration, Confession, Thanks, Supplication), the following might be a good model for our prayers:

- **P – Praise and thanks**
- **R – Remember your sin and your Savior**
- **A – Ask for specific things**
- **Y – Yield to God’s will**

Try this prayer model on for size this week. If you aren’t going through any dilemmas, imagine you are Shawn and write a prayer using the PRAY outline. Remember to look at the troubles through the lens of Romans 8:28 and everything else we talked about today.

P –

R –

A -

Y -

Lesson 2 – When Our Anger Holds on Longer Than We Want It To

Goals

- Learn God’s will concerning anger and forgiveness
- Apply what we learn about anger and forgiveness to our lives

Life Example

Sally and Alice were high school friends. They really liked spending time together and, at first, shared everything with each other—fears, hopes, struggles, you name it. Then one day Sally told Alice that she liked George. Alice was also interested in George, but did not tell that to Sally. When George and Sally started to date, Sally often brought Alice along because, well, that’s what good friends do. But it didn’t take long for George to break up with Sally and start dating Alice instead. When Sally found out that Alice and George were a thing, she felt betrayed. She vowed to never speak to Alice again—and she followed through with it. George and Alice would get married. Sally would meet Frank at college and marry him, having three children and a wonderful marriage.

But then came time for the 25-year high-school reunion. Sally and Cindy end up running into each other. Needless to say, things feel awkward for both of them. It should be mentioned that neither woman nor their husbands are Christian.

4. For what reasons do you think this encounter would be so awkward for each woman, even though 25 years had passed by?

Reflections of Faith

While something like this sounds like it’s straight out of a movie, you likely have experience with power of **anger**, especially when it’s coupled with things like **pain** and **denial**. These three highlighted terms will play a big role in our discussion today, along with **information gathering**. They are all part of a cycle called the “preforgiveness cycle.” Note that title—as long as someone refuses to leave these things behind, they will never forgive. Yet this is a common and, sometimes, necessary part of the path to forgiveness. The **information gathering** is simple enough—you learn the initial reality of the sin or you uncover more information as time goes on. As that information grows, there is potential for all three of the other things to grow.

5. Explain why someone might deny the information they learn about someone’s sins against them.
 - a. In what way does **denial** get in the way of forgiveness?

6. We will talk about the proper way to handle these things in an upcoming lesson. What are some consequences of unresolved anger or pain that we hear about in specific Bible stories?
 - a. Cain and Abel –
 - b. Judas Iscariot –
 - c. Moses (when he struck a rock rather than speaking to it) –
 - d. Others?
 - e. Clearly, things could have been different in each situation if pain and anger would have been addressed properly.

Light from the Word

7. Turn to **Genesis 50:15-17** (if you have your service folder, you can open it to page 7). Compare Alice to Joseph's brothers.
 - a. Compare Joseph to Sally.
8. Go to **Ephesians 4:26-27**. What warning does God give us about anger?
 - a. When he tells us to not let the sun go down when we are angry, God is telling us to resolve things quickly. For what reasons is it difficult to forgive quickly?
 - b. What dangers can grudges bring about?
9. Read **Colossians 3:13** (today's Gospel Acclamation/Verse of the Day—pg. 9 of the service folder). List the different aspects of the Lord's forgiveness that help you forgive others.

10. What insights do the following passages give us about forgiveness?

a. **Luke 6:37** –

b. **Luke 17:3-4** –

c. **Luke 23:34** –

Sally and Alice talk, but the conversation is awkward and clunky. After a long pause (the kind where you can tell you've run out of "small talk"), Sally finally asks where George is. The following scenarios present a few different possible answers to the question. Discuss how Sally might react to each scenario (keeping in mind none of these people are Christian).

11. Alice says George always had a wandering eye and that they divorced after his second affair about 12 years ago. He left her with four kids to raise, so life has been hard. She and the kids have not heard from him in three years. Alice makes it clear that George was an awful husband.

12. Alice says that George died in an accident three years earlier. He had been such a good husband and provider, and the insurance money that he left provides for her and the kids very well. They had loved each other very much. She still misses him.

13. Alice points to the table where George is sitting. Sally notices that George is obviously drunk. His clothes are disheveled and he looks about 15 years older than he actually is.

14. Alice points to the table where George is sitting. He's still as attractive as ever.

Now imagine these scenarios again, but Sally and her husband, Frank, have become Christians. How might the things we've discussed today influence Sally's thinking and responses?

Closing Prayer 727 Where Charity and Love Prevail vs. 3-4
**Forgive we now each other's faults as we our faults confess;
and let us love each other well in Christian holiness.**

**Let strife among us be unknown, let all contention cease;
be God's the glory that we seek, be ours his holy peace. Amen.**