



Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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HG155 Who Cares When ... I Have A Family Crisis?

2 Samuel 15:13-37

Home Group Study Notes

26 November 2017 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful for your discussions.



Welcome (10 mins) Ice Breaker

Like King David, our own Queen has had her fair share of family crises. Can you remember some of them that made her refer to 1992 as her 'Annus Horribilis'?



Looking Upwards (10 mins) Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



HG155 Who Cares When ... I Have A Family Crisis?

2 Samuel 15:13-37

Home Group Sermon

26 November 2017 - Pauline Woolnough

Introduction The last in this home group series asks the question “Who Cares when I have a family crisis?” Wherever people live in close proximity to each other there are bound to be problems and conflict often resulting in stress and change. Crises can come out of the blue and be out of our control, they can be global like terrorism and war and some are environmental, like earthquakes and hurricanes. Others are more personal like divorce, bankruptcy, illness and death. All family members are affected and they cause anguish sorrow and pain but crises are a part of life. We will all go through difficult times, the question is not if we go through a crisis, its when we go through one and how will we respond? The Bible tells of many families that were in crisis, in fact the very first family, Adam and Eve, ended up arguing and blaming one another after disobeying God’s instructions to eat the fruit from a particular tree, they ended up homeless! Their two boys couldn’t stand each other resulting in Cain murdering Abel, Esau was cheated out of his inheritance by his brother Jacob, Joseph’s brothers ganged up against him wanting to kill him and of course the Bible makes no effort hide the failures of David or the troubles within his family. Our families today are no different to those described in the Bible. We may not go through some of the extreme situations that biblical families experienced, but sin still plays a major part in causing unhappiness in our family life today. Jealousy, misunderstanding, spoilt children, poor discipline, hatred, disagreement, deceitfulness, and a lack of openness and honesty among members of families today are just as evident as they were in the families of the Bible.

David's Family Crisis David was a great leader of men and had many strong character qualities but he was a weak leader when it came to his children. He did not discipline them when they needed it. His eldest son Amnon was infatuated with his half-sister Tamar and his lust for her drove him to rape her. David was angry but he took no action to punish his son’s criminal act. Tamar’s brother Absalom however was outraged and set out to get revenge. He threw a party and invited his royal brothers and when Amnon was drunk, Absalom ordered his servants to kill him. Both sons may have seen David’s reluctance to discipline his children as a weakness which offered them opportunities. He had failed to give them a consistent role model and was in no position to judge his eldest son for his sexual sins when he himself had committed adultery with Bathsheba, (2 Samuel 11). Where parents lose the moral leadership of their families, their children have no authority figure by which to guide their own actions. The sins of the father can become the sins of the child when our children see and emulate our bad behaviour.

4. David was far from being a model husband or father yet he is still known as “*a man after God’s own heart*,” 1 Samuel 13:14. What can we learn from his failures, his faith and how he dealt with his own crises?

5. David submitted to God’s chastening, (vs3 0) and repented. Discuss what type of crisis could lead us to submit and repent.

6. Are you going through a situation at present which still leads you to doubt whether God cares? How can the support of your Home Group help?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. David's family lived out their crises in public, why do you think we prefer, mainly, to keep ours private?

2. What has helped you the most when you have gone through a family crisis?

3. Childhood hurts, even careless words can have an impact on our lives. Do you have any childhood experiences that you are able to share that have had a negative effect on you and stayed with you into adulthood?

Absalom was ready to kill his father and put himself on the throne and so gathered a large army. David was *not* willing to kill Absalom and so was forced to flee from Jerusalem, heart broken that one of his own sons would turn against him. David had a large number of loyal followers and soon he had an army of considerable strength and under the command of one of his generals, Joab, Absalom's army was utterly defeated but although David had instructed his generals to deal gently with his son, Joab killed Absalom. David was overcome with grief and cried out in despair. (2 Samuel 18:33). The love a parent has for their child is the strongest of bonds, our children may treat us badly but the bottom line is we will do anything for them. Here, after all Absalom had done, David still loved his son and would have forgiven him anything.

Does God Care? People often ask the questions: "*Where is God in all this trouble, why does he let bad things happen*" but better to ask is "*is it possible to find God in the midst of this crisis, can he help me through this, does he care?*" Even without the New Testament and all the promises of Jesus to read and hold on to, and with none of the wealth of testimonial Christian books that we have today, David knew from his experience and relationship with God that He cares and He will help. We get a glimpse of his faith in Psalm 3, that he wrote when he fled from his son Absalom. "*O Lord, I have so many enemies; so many are against me. So many are saying, "God will never rescue him!" But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, and the One who lifts my head high. I cried out to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy mountain. I lay down and slept. I woke up in safety, for the Lord was watching me."*"

When circumstances are against us its tempting to think that God is also against us and that perhaps we are being punished but David here reminds us that when everything looks hopeless, God is still there for us, so don't blame Him, seek him. David knew that wherever he was and in whatever situation he found himself in, God was with him and although in the midst of a crisis sleep often evades us David was able to lie down and sleep peacefully. His life and kingdom were under threat but David was at peace, he had no trouble sleeping because he knew that God heard him when he cried out and the assurance of answered prayer brought him peace. So if you are lying awake at night, struggling to sleep, fearful about the future put your trust in God and call out to him.

Protect The Innocent Even as his life was under threat David still thought of those around him. As he left Jerusalem he spoke with Ittai one of the military leaders who wasn't Jewish, and under no obligation to go with David, this was not a place for innocent people so he told Ittai and his men that it was not their fight and they could leave and go home. In the midst of a family crisis we need to do our best to keep those who are innocent out of it in order to keep them safe and protect them. Wherever possible we especially need to keep arguments in the privacy of the bedroom and out of the living room in front of the children because what we say and do can have a huge impact and consequences in ways that we can't always see from the outside. It is our job to protect them wherever possible.

Seek God's Presence The last thing we often think to do when we are going through a crisis is to take time out to worship, we are far more likely to spend time praying for a way out, asking for help.

Even I suspect in our home groups more time is given to praying about our situations than worship but here even in the midst of this dangerous situation this is what David takes time to do, 2 Samuel 15:24. He was literally running for his life but rather than concentrating on his escape David took time to seek God's presence and will. He understood something that we often forget, that when a crisis comes, worship needs to remain a priority in our lives. So Zadok the Priest brought the Ark of the Covenant out to where David was and Abiathar offered sacrifices to God until everyone had left the city. More than ever when we go through hard times we need to seek the presence of God and nothing helps us do that more than worship where we can concentrate on His goodness and sovereignty over everything, even our problems. Worship needs to be a priority in all our lives. If you want to find God in the tough times you need to seek him in the good times.

Horatio G. Spafford, wrote his only hymn in the depths of misery and bereavement. He was a successful Chicago lawyer but lost most of his wealth in the financial crisis of 1873. His young 4 yr son died of scarlet fever and he decided his family needed a holiday. As he was delayed with work he sent his family on ahead to England without him but whilst crossing the Atlantic their ship was struck by another, and sank. Of 225 passengers, only 87 of them survived, including his wife, but his four daughters perished. As soon as she reached land, his wife telegraphed to her husband: "*Saved alone. Children lost. What shall I do?*" In the depth of his bereavement, he wrote his only hymn, - "*It is Well With My Soul.*" Perhaps the words of the first stanza will take on new meaning for you knowing Horatio's family's story. "*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way. When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."*" Although his pain would have been unimaginable, Horatio Spafford, like David was able to rise above the power of his pain and find comfort and solace in worship.

Seek God's Provision Comforted by worship David was brought to a place of repentance and he said to Zadok '*Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favour in the Lord's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling-place again. But if he says, "I am not pleased with you," then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him.*' 2 Samuel 15:25-26. David isn't simply resigned to his fate or giving up and feeling sorry for himself, rather he realised that the current threat was the Lord's discipline for his sins. Through Nathan, God had informed David that his sin with Bathsheba would result in his suffering consequences which would be similar to his sin, but much greater in magnitude, 2 Samuel 12. The word that Nathan prophesied came back to him and so humbling himself David prayed. Just as worship is seeking God's presence, prayer is seeking God's provision and David understood that if he was going to get through the crisis, he needed God's provision. Prayer is our most valued resources during a crisis.

Conclusion Crises are a fact of life and we all have to deal with them. People everywhere at this very moment are going through some form of crisis or another. Your problems may not be to the extent that David had to deal with but the reality is that when you go through them, you are not alone. David's despair over the death of Absalom has been felt down the centuries by parents full of regret for what might have been.

It's a cry by every parent whose love, dreams and sacrifice have been squandered or rejected by a rebellious and ungrateful child. His grief is felt in our less than perfect families, shared by those who grieve over a failed marriage, the death of a loved one and his misery and sorrow is caught in the heart of every one of us who has been hurt again and again carrying the pain with them forever. Life can be very tough.

Some of you and your families may be going through your own personal crisis at this time, you may even be trying to put on a brave face and cover it up but when troubles crowd in and we cant sleep at night we wonder if there is anyone who really cares and more, we wonder if God cares. Some people, even Christians like to tell us that God wants us to be happy, that he wants us to have all the good things in life that we aspire to and would like to have. The truth is, our happiness and success are not God's end goals and not always his best for us. We like to think it is because that fits our consumer-driven, instant-access, you-deserve-it world and it allows us to turn a blind eye to other biblical truths, but to be blunt our happiness is not God's intent nor our reason for existing. We are here to praise God—not to accumulate wealth and live comfortably, or to feel satisfied and reach our personal goals and while it's right and good to be thankful for his blessings in our lives, don't fail to see that blessings from God come in many different guises and the aim of them is for us to spend our lives drawing closer to Him. Sometimes we are drawn close when life feels good and worry free but often, we draw close to Him when we aren't happy, and in times of deep suffering and hardship.

Over the course of this series we have asked the questions: *Who cares when times are hard; Who cares when I'm stressed and depressed; Who cares when I'm feeling all alone; Who cares when I'm in huge debt; Who cares when I'm suffering a loss; and Who cares when I have a family crisis.* Hopefully from the experiences of the people we have studied, and from those we have listened to and discussed with in our home groups, you will be left with no doubt at all that God does care. He is there when we call out to him, and he is there even when we don't. David trusted God and enjoyed the peace that came with it, he could lie down in the eye of his storm and sleep knowing that God heard his cry and that he would sustain him. He does not always answer our prayers in the way that we hope He would, He doesn't always take the pain away and make things better but I know from my own experiences, as you will from your own if you know and trust His Son, that God cares about every aspect of our lives and He gives us hope in the present and promises a future where there will be no more times of hardship, suffering or crisis.

Emmanuel Text for 2017

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14