**Smoke Signals**

**Lessons from the Pit- Week 7**

**Small Group Notes**

**November 21 and 24**

**Main Point:** Today’s lesson is the second part of the sermon on depression. Last week we discussed about how you can get depressed in life, while this week we are going to look at what the Lord teaches us in these times of depression.

**Introduction:**

What does the statement mean, “to learn a lesson the hard way”?

As a child, what were some life changing lessons that you learned? Do you pass on those same lessons the same way to others? What impact did it make in your life to learn lessons?

What is the hardest lesson that you ever had to learn? Are you still learning from the lesson? How has your life changed from going through the lesson? Has it changed for positive or negative because of it?

This sessions focus is about the lessons that we learn, that often can lead to depression or are in the midst of a depressed state. However, by seeking what the Lord desires to teach us in these moments, it can impact how we move forward from today and begin to grow beyond the “pit” moments of life.

Even though we are going to read some of the same passages from last week, we are going to review them in light of growing.

**Discuss:**

1. Read Lamentations 3:1-14

Explain: Jeremiah wrote mainly as Jerusalem personified. Here he began to write as the voice of an individual sufferer. Yes, this was Jeremiah, but it certainly was not *only* him. He and many others had **seen affliction**, and they knew that it came as God’s discipline (**the rod of His wrath**).

What word pictures stands out to you? How do the word pictures help you understand how Jeremiah felt?

Which word picture do you relate to the most?

If you had to summarize what Jeremiah is feeling in 3:1-14, what would you say? Have you ever felt this way?

2. Read Lamentations 3:15-26

Explain: It is evident that in the first verses of the passage (14-20) there is a *bitterness* of *complaint* against the *bitterness* of *adversity*. The result is that hope seems to have escaped Jeremiah in his state. Then in verse 21, we find a different feeling; he *humbles* himself under the mighty hand of God, and then his *hope* revives.”

How do verses 15-20 define someone that is bitter?

What words or phrases stick out to you the most in verses 15-20? How can these be difficult to picture? How do these words or phrases become relatable?

What is the difference in verses 21-26 and verses 15-20?

How can hope be an antidote to depression? How is hope and the Lord’s compassion connected?

How is waiting for the Lord’s salvation a picture of waiting in your life?

3. Read Deuteronomy 31:8; Romans 8:28; Exodus 14:14

How do these verses all relate to one another?

What truths do they affirm about God’s character in the midst of a difficult time?

How do these verses overcome our feelings that can become misguided?

**Dig Deeper:**

***Lamentations 3:1-14 (NIV)***

*I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of the Lord’s wrath. 2He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; 3indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. 4He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. 5He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. 6He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. 7He has walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains. 8Even when I call out or cry for help, he shuts out my prayer. 9He has barred my way with blocks of stone; he has made my paths crooked. 10Like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding, 11he dragged me from the path and mangled me and left me without help. 12He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows. 13He pierced my heart with arrows from his quiver. 14I became the laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day long.*

* Be honest in the pit.
  + Honesty about our feelings starts the liberation process.
  + Our feelings are real but not fully informed.
  + When God allows a pit, it isn’t to punish or push away but ultimately to draw us closer.
* We are not alone in the pit.

What is an honest moment you can share of when you have been depressed?

Why is honesty about where we are today a step towards freedom?

Why should we not blame God for pits, but embrace them?

What is the Lord teaching you today?

***Lamentations 3:15-26 (NIV)***

*He has filled me with bitter herbs and given me gall to drink. 16He has broken my teeth with gravel; he has trampled me in the dust. 17I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. 18So I say, “My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord.” 19I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. 20I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. 21Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: 22Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.” 25The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.*

* Learn to sit in the pit
  + Pits deepen when we wallow in shame, focus on blame, and quickly dull the pain.
  + Life’s most valuable lessons are often learned in the pit.
  + Sometimes in the pit God is trying to remove an idol from our lives.(Read Psalm 119:71)
  + Sometimes God allows the pit to humble us (Read 2 Samuel 16)
  + God might be teaching us compassion in the pit (Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
* Call to mind truth in the pit

What are ways that you have wallowed in shame and blame to dull the pain?

Is there an idol in your life that the Lord is calling you to remove? How can you as a group help each other remove idols? (Hold each other accountable, be transparent)

What is the last humbling experience you had? How did it impact you today?

What truth did the Lord teach you in a pit?

**Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV)**

The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

**Romans 8:28 (NIV)**

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.

**Exodus 14:14 (NIV)**

The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

* Depression occurs when feelings trade seats with faith.

After reading these three verses, how are you encouraged?

How can you take the lessons you learned and encourage someone else?

What difference does it make in your life to know that your story can help others in a pit as well?

**Do:**

Spend some time in reflection about where you are in your life. Do you see that you are in a pit? What is the Lord teaching you? Are you ready and motivated to move beyond the pit?

Who is someone that you can reach out to about a pit you have experienced or experiencing? Spend some time as a group asking how you can help each other in the group to move beyond the pit?

Where do you see the Lord using your story (current or past) for His glory?