



Week of October 28, 2018: Journey through the Wall

Discussion Questions Set #1

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).
“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2-4)

1. Have you experienced different “seasons” in your following of Jesus? Describe these seasons and what occurred to move you from one season to the next.
2. In service, we made a distinction between happiness and joy, understanding that happiness is a feeling based on what is happening, while joy is something experienced regardless of circumstance. Joy is a surprise gift of relationship with God, an unexpected experience of God’s character. Have you experienced the difference between happiness and joy in your own life? How does pursuing joy differ from pursuing happiness?
3. In his book Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, Peter Scazerro writes that “some of us hide behind our faith to flee the pain of our lives rather than to trust God to transform us through it.” (Scazerro, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, pg. 102). What do you think he means by this statement? Is he right to conclude this?
4. “James 1:2-4 reveals that the circumstances that we think are out to destroy us, can actually be used by God to transform us, so that we lack nothing”. Do you believe this to be true? Explain why or why not and give examples if you are able.

Discussion Questions Set #2

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:3)
“We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:3-5)

In our sermon, we learned about the experience of “the wall”; that, in following Jesus, we can sometimes come to a place of challenge in our faith – a place where God seems distant or perhaps even absent, a place where previous ways of interacting with God seem insufficient. We come to this place not due to a failure of faith, but because God is doing a work of refinement in us.

1. Have you ever experienced a “wall” in your following of Jesus? Share about this experience and the challenges it presented to faith.
2. We suggested in sermon that God will often use these wall-like experiences to re-orient our hearts toward Him, but this reorientation readily requires that we are stripped of those things we have placed our faith in apart from God. Why do you think that God’s re-orienting of our hearts often require a stripping away of other things?
3. What do you think is God’s “end game” in this process? Consider the character we examined in service, Judas Iscariot ... what do you think Jesus desired Judas to do when he came up against his wall of broken dreams and shattered expectations?
4. What dangers do you see present within this experience of a wall in one’s following of Jesus? Worst case scenario, what might occur when we come up against such a wall?
5. How might one prevent a Judas-like reaction to a spiritual wall?



Discussion Questions Set #3

We concluded our sermon with an examination of some of the results that come when we diligently and, through the empowering of God's Spirit, push through a wall in our faith. We discussed four results:

1. Such experiences cause us to grow in comfort with our own brokenness. How might the experience of pushing through a wall help us to understand our brokenness in a positive and edifying way? What results come from such a growth in comfort with brokenness?
2. Such experiences cause us to grow in comfort with mystery, leading to a greater acknowledgement of God's sovereignty. How might the experience of pushing through a wall cause us to better acknowledge God's sovereignty? How might a growth in comfort with mystery positively impact our following of Jesus?
3. Such experiences cause us to grow in comfort in waiting at the wall. How do you think that a growth in patience and longsuffering might result in the development of greater spiritual maturity?
4. Such experiences cause us to grow in comfort with a detachment from things. What benefit can come from less of an attachment to "things"? Do you agree that "when we realize that joy can be experienced apart from tangible things, we will find a path to true peace and contentment"? Why or why not?