

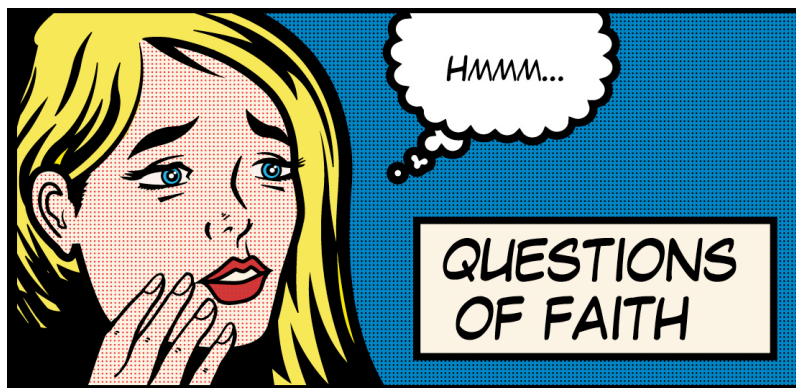
Small Group Study

OUR VISION

To know God and enjoy Him forever.

OUR MISSION

To build a Christian community by making fully devoted disciples of non-religious and nominally religious people



DISCUSSION

Questions of Faith: Grow in Faith through Trials and Doubt

SCRIPTURE

Have volunteers read the following scriptures:

Psalms 22:1-2 (NIV)

- 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from the words of my groaning?
- 2 O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, and am not silent.

James 1:2-4 (NLT)

2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

Romans 8:35-39 (NLT)

35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? 36 (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") 37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ICE BREAKER

Use ONE of the questions to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. Tell us about a time when you were injured pretty severely.
2. What two people have helped you out most in your life? What did they do that helped you?
3. What was the highlight of this past week for you?

1. Look at Psalm 22:1-2 again. On a scale of 1-10, how much can you personally identify with David's words? Have you ever felt like this? Do you feel like this now?

2. Briefly describe one of the biggest trials you've had to deal with (and that you're willing to share with the group), and how the situation was resolved. Answer the following questions:

- a. What did you learn from your ordeal?
- b. Who, if anyone, helped you through it?
- c. Did it draw you closer to God, or drive you away from him?
- d. If you could change anything about the situation, what would it be?

3. Here are some of the greatest trials from scripture. (You don't need to look up and read every scripture here. They are here to remind you of the story.)

- a. The trial of Peter and John (Acts 4:1-22)
- b. Jesus' trial (John 18:28-40)
- c. Abraham's faith is tested (Genesis 22:1-18)
- d. Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 6:15-23)
- e. The trials of Joseph (Genesis 50:15-21)
- f. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are thrown into the fire (Daniel 3:13-30)

Can you think of any others? What can we learn from these people of the faith?



Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego by Simeon Solomon, 1863.

4. Look up the following passages and discuss (1) what you can learn, (2) how you can grow, and (3) how you might inspire others as you walk through the trials of life.

- a. 2 Corinthians 1:3-6
- b. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18
- c. Hebrews 12:7-11
- d. Romans 8:28
- e. Ecclesiastes 11:5

5. Close this study by having a volunteer read the following, taken from *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*:

THE VALLEY OF VISION

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly,
Thou has brought me to the valley of vision,
Where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights;
Hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox
That the way down is the way up,
That to be low is to be high,
That the broken heart is the healed heart,
That the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
That the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
That to having nothing is to possess all,
That to bear the cross is to wear the crown
That to give is to receive,
That the valley is the place of vision.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,
And the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars shine;
Let me find thy light in my darkness,
Thy life in my death,
Thy joy in my sorrow,
Thy grace in my sin,
Thy riches in my poverty,
Thy glory in my valley.

6. Make sure to pray for those who are going through trials and doubts right now--those who are trying to stand firm in their most daunting hour. Commit to praying for each other every day.

God bless,
Roger Sodsod
Small Group Pastor
email: rsodsod@vineyardkcnorth.com