



Parkway Fellowship

Won't You Be My Neighbor? • Fighting Our Common Enemy •

Psalm 142:5-7; 1 Samuel 22:1-2; Hebrews 10:23-25; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 • 09/09/2018

Main Point

Those who are in Christ share a common goal, a common adversary, and a common experience.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

In terms of number of people, what is the largest event you have ever attended?

When you're in a large group, do you typically feel connected to everyone or do you still feel alone? Explain.

What about church? How would you encourage someone who visits a large church and says they want to be a part of the community, but they feel disconnected and alone in the crowd?

It's possible to be surrounded by people and still feel alone. That's true even at church—in a large worship service or a small group like this one. It's a blessing and encouragement to be part of a fast growing community, but the greatest blessing and encouragement comes when that community bands together for one common goal. When we do this as a church, we're compelled to honestly share our common experiences so that we can together fight our common enemy.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a couple of volunteers to read Psalm 142:5-7 and 1 Samuel 22:1-2.

Both of these passages describe a difficult time in David's life. After defeating Goliath, David went on to achieve other great military successes which greatly increased his popularity among the people. However, this also effectively destroyed his favor with King Saul, who became jealous and wanted to kill David. So David ran for his life.

From Psalm 142:5-6, how would you describe David's emotional state when he was hiding in the cave of Adullam? From verse 7, what was David's hope and expectation?

When you are facing difficult circumstances, do you long for the "righteous [to] gather around" you, or would you rather be left alone? Why?

How did God answer David's prayer (see 1 Sam. 22:1-2)? What common goal did David and the 400 men who joined him have? What common adversary? What common experience did they all share?

David felt alone, and God brought him community. These men were lonely outcasts, too. But they determined to band together around a common goal (to make David king), a common adversary (Saul), and a common experience (being desperate, in debt, and discontented). As a result, God used each of them to help each other. They became so close that they would die for each other. This is a picture of Christian community today. When the kingship of Christ is our common goal, we will determine to fight our common adversary together by encouraging one another in our common experience.

| Ask a volunteer to read Hebrews 10:23-25.

What common goal did the writer of Hebrews identify here for believers in verse 23?

What common adversary, issue, or obstacle did he infer we would face in carrying out that goal?

What common experience did the writer indicate we should share to help us fight the obstacles we face in pursuing that goal?

The writer of Hebrews implored his readers to hold on to the confession of hope without wavering; that is, to remain steadfast and faithful in our relationship with and commitment to King Jesus. This is not solely an individual call. Though we are personally accountable to God in that confession of hope in Jesus, we are corporately engaged with one another as we carry it out practically each day.

Thinking back to 1 Samuel 22, what reasons or excuses might David and the 400 men who joined him have had for not banding together?

What reasons keep some Christians from joining other believers in not banding together to fight the battles they face? Why is it important that we do band together, uniting around our common purpose, fighting our common adversary, and sharing our common experience?

| Ask a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

What common thread do you see in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 with 1 Samuel 22 and Hebrews 10:23-25?

What does God intend to do for you in your struggles? What does He intend to do for other believers through your struggles?

When have you experienced this in your own life?

Jesus is sympathetic to our suffering, and He helps us by giving us the Holy Spirit and by promising us forgiveness and resurrection. The promises of God in Christ are key to enduring suffering. Jesus will not abandon us. If Christ does not give up on us, then we should not give up on others either. We have great confidence that the same hope we have for our own souls extends by grace to others who call on Christ. That grace takes on practical application when we engage in Christian community with our eyes set on our common goal, openly and honestly sharing experiences, and when we are determined to fight our enemy together.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What would you say is the greatest enemy or threat to your experiencing abundant life in Christ here on earth?

How can our group encourage one another when we experience loneliness?

As a group, how can we seek to fight our common enemy together as we share the common experience of being in Christ?

How is Christian community made attractive to those who do not yet believe as we live together in unity because of Christ?

Pray

Thank God He promises to comfort us in our struggles. Thank Him also for the church, who fights the adversary alongside you. With the kingship of Christ as your life pursuit, ask Him how you can better share experiences with the believers He has put in your life.

Commentary

| 1 SAMUEL 22:1-2

When David left Gath he turned east for the hill country of Judah. There he waited in the cave of Adullam. When his family heard the news, they went down to him (22:1). They certainly came to comfort David, but they may also have done this in fear of Saul. Soon there gathered around David all who were in distress or in debt or discontented (22:2). David's band of "outlaws" grew to 400 men, and he became their leader. These men were also outcasts from society.

Trusting that God will provide is a difficult thing to do in times of hardship and adversity. It takes faith to do this. When the Lord delivered David from the hand of Saul, he sang: "As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?" (2 Sam. 22:31-32).

Years later, David would also sing of this trust and faith in God in many psalms. Over and over, David called for his people to put their trust in God. One example, among many, is Psalm 20:7: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."

| PSALM 142:5-7

142:5. Here is the second summit of faith as the psalmist lays hold of God afresh. David prays firmly and pointedly, I cry to you, O Lord . Although he feels shut up in this cave, God is his refuge (machseh), a place of shelter, a stronghold. God is my portion, meaning God is his allotment, or all he has. But God is all he needs, the sustainer and strength of his life in the land of the living, that is, as long as he is alive.

142:6. Repeating his earlier plea (vv. 1-2,5), David pleads that God heed him. David laments that the adverse circumstances in which he finds himself have humbled him and brought him low. Specifically, he has been brought low by those who pursue him, meaning Saul and his henchmen. They are too strong for David, far beyond what he can handle.

142:7. The cave in which David finds himself, hiding from Saul, has become a prison for him, a place of solitary confinement. He cannot escape it as he finds himself between a rock and a hard place. But more than that, he is in an emotional prison, a psychological black hole. Only God himself can deliver him, something he believes God will perform.

| 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7

1:3-4. Paul began describing his hardships on a positive, exuberant note. The formula praise be to ... God derived from the Old Testament (Ps. 41:13), but Paul modified it to express distinctively Christian praise. Not only is God praised, but he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This modification demonstrates that Paul saw Christianity as one with Old Testament religion, but not precisely the same. Christ had become the center of true belief. New Testament believers relate to God as the one who sent Christ.

Paul added that the Father has compassion and all comfort. This praise also derives from the Old Testament (Isa. 51:12; 66:13). Compassion denotes God's mercy and his concern for the plight of those who suffer. Comfort is what God gives to those who suffer. These terms were appropriate because Paul was about to describe his own troubles in suffering for the gospel.

Paul suffered and was comforted partly so he could bring comfort to others in any trouble. His suffering in ministry was an act of service to the Corinthians. Having suffered and been comforted, Paul could comfort others with the comfort he had received from God. Paul's use of the first person suggests that he thought primarily about himself and his company in this passage, but the principle applies to all believers. God permits his servants to suffer, and then comforts them so they may in turn comfort others.

1:5. Paul explained how he knew this principle to be true. Christians are so intimately joined with Christ that experiences flow from Christ, to believers, through believers, and to others. The sufferings of Christ extend from Christ to his followers. Believers fill up ... Christ's afflictions because the church is his body (see Col. 1:24; cf. Phil. 3:10). This was plain enough from the hardships in Paul's own ministry. Yet, just as Christ received joy and glory in his resurrection, and sent the Holy Spirit of comfort, comfort also overflows to believers through Christ. In union with Christ, we face the hardships of sin and death, but we also receive compassionate encouragement from God.

1:6. Because the Corinthians benefited when the apostles were distressed, Paul's experiences had been the Corinthians' comfort. As he ministered at great personal cost, he brought comfort and salvation to those who heard his message. At the same time, when the apostles were comforted by Christ, they received the encouragement they needed to bring the Corinthians comfort.

Further, the comfort believers received from Paul's suffering produce[d] ... patient endurance in the midst of their own sufferings. Christians must remain faithful to Christ, no matter how difficult circumstances become. Endurance (hypomone) describes how believers must continue in faithful service to the end. Yet,

endurance will not last unless it is patient. Patience is the ability to wait for Christ to return and end all suffering. Comfort enables believers to find energy, which in turn makes them patient as they endure suffering.

1:7. The Corinthians faced trials, disappointments, and conflicts. But Paul believed they had saving faith in Christ and that they would endure. He hoped this because he knew the Corinthians share[d] in the apostles' comfort as well as their sufferings. So long as Christ comforted the Corinthians, they would be able to endure their suffering to the end.

| HEBREWS 10:23-25

10:23. This exhortation appeals to us to maintain spiritual consistency. We are urged to hold firmly to the hope we profess. This hope overshadows glory which beamed more brightly than the glories of the old order. "Unswervingly" denotes an object which stands absolutely straight, not departing from the perpendicular. We are to lay hold of Christ and never let go, even in the slightest. No persecution, real or feared, was to lessen the ardor of these believers for Christ.

10:24-25. This exhortation calls us to responsibility to one another. The appeal to consider demands concentrated attention. The goal of this attention was to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. As Christians we have a corporate responsibility. We must help others who stumble and falter. We must concentrate on the needs of others and not on our individual salvation only. To spur other believers forward in the Christian life, followers of Christ must meet together. Some of the readers of Hebrews were neglecting to meet together for worship, and this limited their ability to give and receive encouragement toward good works. Christians who meet together with the aim of promoting godliness and love for one another can be remarkably successful in their ventures.