

ICE BREAKER

What helps you regain hope when you feel hopeless?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of the message was most encouraging to you? What part do you find challenging?
2. What did You notice about God in the passage? What did you notice about yourself and other people in it?

GOSPEL EXCHANGE (REDEMPITIVE WORK)

Jesus asks us to give Him our burdens (Matthew 11:28-29), whatever they may be (a lie we have believed about God or ourselves, our hurt or negative emotions, or even our concerns for loved ones), so He can carry them for us and give us His peace (wholeness and completeness) in exchange.

What do you want to exchange with Jesus today?

What is the burden? “Lord Jesus, I give you my...”

What’s His gift? “Lord Jesus, I receive your...”

ACTION QUESTIONS

1. What is one step of obedience you can take this week, based on what you’ve learned today? *(NOTE – You might consider stopping and prayerfully asking God to answer this question for you, taking 30-45 seconds to listen in silence for an answer, then write it down.)*
2. During the coming week, who is someone with whom you can share what you learned today? *(NOTE – Consider repeating the same step with this question as the previous question.)*



Sermon Study - Conversation Guide

August 27, 2023

“Are You Convinced?”

Romans 8:35-39

This guide is a discipleship tool for personal reflection, family conversations, for home groups, and for Table Talk on Sundays @10:40 on the Lowell Patio

Coastal Community Church
mycoastal.org

When I'm asked to speak at a church, I think to myself, "What is the one message I would want to give, if this was my one and only chance to speak at this location, to this particular group of people, at this particular time in history?" I never know if I'll get the chance again. I wonder if this was also what the apostle Paul thought as he traveled and preached. He often had only one chance in a particular location to speak to a particular crowd, and he was never sure if he would return.

Paul, inspired by the very Spirit of God working in him, wrote a letter to the church in Rome. This message was read and heard by the believers there, who had issues described in Romans 8 as hardships, famine and persecution. Though Emperor Caesar Augustus claimed to be the savior and patron of Rome, he made life hard, especially for believers. It was in this setting that Paul sent a letter to the believers in Rome.

8:35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."* 37 *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Are you convinced? There was a time when I wasn't. Personally, even a year ago, I had no desire to go to church, let alone apply to any pastoral position. Yes, this pastor gave up on church. I didn't even want to get up to take a shower or brush my teeth. I went to see a doctor who diagnosed me with PDD (Persistent Depressive Disorder). It's a condition that lasts a few years and is brought on by trauma.

The trauma was that I had to leave my church family of 20 years due to spiritual abuse. In the next church I tried, I faced blatant bullying and racism. That'll do it. I gave up on church and I almost gave up on God.

Meanwhile, I was finishing up my Master of Divinity at Biola and wondered, "What am I going to do with a pastor's degree when I give up on church?" We tried going to churches only to walk out because of the pain I associated with church. Then we stopped. It was at this moment that my loving husband said, "We need to go to church." I looked high and low for a church. Coastal was my last church stop in this county.

Every week, I showed up late to Coastal, hoping I wouldn't have to say anything to anyone. But every week I walked out thinking, "I kind of like this church." I really didn't want to like this church because I was afraid of getting hurt again. Now here I am preaching, wondering what the heck God's doing.

Paul was not speaking just to Romans. God is speaking through him to us! I know so many who have been through so much. Many of us, even as we sit here today, and many online, are suffering from the loss of home, family, job, and relationships. We especially have empathy and compassion for those on the island of Maui who have lost almost everything, including so much of their history.

What can we say to those who have been through so much? What can we say to ourselves? Dearly beloved, we are witnesses of the inseparable love of God that empowers us to conquer this world. There is nothing that can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus! Because of His great love, WE HAVE HOPE.

Are you convinced of this? That nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus? Are you convinced that there is nothing in or out of this world, seen or unseen, that can separate you from the love of God? Do you trust that we have God's infinitely secure love, so nothing, absolutely nothing, can conquer you? Does your life reveal that you are so convinced of this hope that you will not give up?

Satan is described as the king of liars and a thief who comes only to steal, kill and destroy. Satan is real! His powers are real. The fight for peoples' souls is real. Yet we are not alone in the fight.

When any of us choose to believe in Jesus, God's Spirit comes to live within us. But wait, there's more! We also have each other. Paul wrote to the church in Rome, not to an individual. The church is God's intentional design. We need to encourage each other to believe our hope is real. This is how we conquer the enemy's lies. Your goal is to keep preaching the truth of Romans 8:35-39 to yourself and to each other.

May the inseparable love of God, displayed in the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus, and the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit be the hopeful reality under which you live, both now and forevermore. Amen.

SMALL GROUP GROUND RULES: Tips for great conversation

- Extroverts: Please allow space and time for introverts to speak.
- Introverts: Please speak up when you have something to contribute.
- Everyone: Show respect by listening to one another, knowing that we all can learn from those who have a different perspective.