**“The Real Me” – Week 4 (Real Pain)**

**May 9-10, 2020**

We are closing out our series called “The Real Me” today with a pretty tough topic. We have a lot of fun here when we gather together, and obviously today is no different. However, during our message and small group discussion time, we talk about some difficult subjects from time to time. We feel like that’s important, though, because being a follower of Jesus requires us to talk about these types of topics. Today, we’re going to talk about REAL pain.

Now, this may not necessarily refer to physical pain…but it could. How many of you have ever suffered an injury like a broken arm or sprained ankle? It stinks, doesn’t it?! Anyone who has done that has probably thought at some point, “Ugh! Why did this have to happen to me?” I’ve felt that way.

**(Leaders Note: Share a story about an injury you’ve suffered. If there are any humorous parts to the story, try to highlight those moments since this will be a pretty serious message.)**

There are all kinds of experiences that shape us into the person we are today. Experiences in school: like the things you learn, teachers you have, people you know. We have family experiences both good and bad. We have spiritual experiences or experiences with our faith. Many of you here have had an experience with God, and as a result, you have become a Christian, placed your faith in Christ, and decided to live your life for Him. However, there’s one type of experience that tends to shape us more than anything else: painful experiences. Everyone goes through situations in life that are hard: a family member or pet passes away, your parents get a divorce, you get bullied at school, someone says something unkind about you or your family, you fail a test or a class, you pray for something and you feel like God doesn’t answer it. All of these are types of painful experiences.

Did you know that Jesus tells us that we will go through painful experiences? It doesn’t matter if you’re a Christian, good person, bad person…bad things will happen to us. Here’s the good news though…Jesus says it in John 16:33: *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

**All of us have BIG problems in life and, sometimes, REAL pain. But…we serve an even BIGGER God. An amazing God! He is with us in troubled times and He has overcome those troubled times. He says it in this verse—“in me you may have peace.” That’s what we’re going to focus on today with our THP.**

**THP: God is with us in REAL pain.**

Pain is a very important topic in the Bible. People like Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, David, Job,Esther, Paul…and even Jesus! They had painful experiences just like we do. Listen to what David tells God in Psalm 13:1-2 – *“How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?”* Another man in the Old Testament, Job, yells at God and curses the day he was born…basically saying, “I wish I never would have been born!” Sarah, a woman in the Old Testament who is married to Abraham, was unable to have children for years. She’s upset at God and in emotional pain that EVEN when God tells her she’s going to have a baby, she laughs! She’s like, “Yeah right, God.” She was so sad and angry that she laughed at God!

Here’s the deal…we all experience pain. However, the reason painful experiences shape us the most is not the pain itself; it is how we respond to it. It’s ok to cry over pain; it’s ok to be sad or angry at God. Did you know that? In fact, it’s actually healthy. Many of us push our feelings down into our heart and we don’t like to talk about them. I think that actually does more damage. Even if we are mad at God because bad things are happening to us, it’s healthier for us to tell him instead of not saying anything. We should do it in prayer. **Every emotion we experience should be processed in prayer.**

There’s one thing in common with pain: God never leaves us. He never wastes a hurt. Even though we may never figure out why something happened to us, we don’t have to wonder if God is with us…He is sitting right next to us. Psalm 139:7-8 says, *“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.”* The writer of this Psalm, David, is saying that no matter how good or how bad life is, God is with us…sitting with us, crying with us, angry with us. He is very close.

Some of you may be going through or have recently gone through a painful experience. Maybe you have thought to yourself, “Why did this happen to me? Why did God allow this to happen to me? Where is God in all this?” Can I encourage you to do something? Don’t hold those feelings inside. Talk to a trusted adult, leader, or friend about it. We talk about this a lot, but this is why we have life groups. We need people who will just sit, listen, and cry with us…and, when the time is right, they can encourage us or give us advice.

**(Leaders Note: Share a painful experience from your life. Tell the students the emotions, uncertainty, and/or confusion you felt during that time. It’s important to be vulnerable when sharing.)**

Ultimately, in spite of our painful experiences (and the experiences of the people in the Bible we heard about today), they still trusted God. They never stopped praying. They might have complained/yelled/cursed at God…but they still did it in front of Him. They didn’t give up. God helped them. God was with them. Even Jesus on the cross said to God, “Why have you forsaken me?” Even though he was hurting physically and emotionally from all the sin of the world being upon Him, he still trusted God and died on the cross for us instead of saving himself. That’s awesome!

**Let’s remember that God is with us during REAL pain. Tell Him what you’re feeling. Make sure you talk to your leaders and group if you’re struggling. If you don’t feel comfortable doing it in a group setting, come talk to your leader or me privately. We’re here to help you, pray with you, and remind you God is with you. Let’s pray.**