



Connection Group Questions
September 27, 2020
"Pressure"

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ."
~ 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

Open

Where are you feeling pressure in your life- Finances? Marriage? Parenting? Work place? School? You might even be feeling spiritual pressure or temptation. Share with your group to whatever degree you are comfortable regarding the pressures you feel.

It would be fine to simply spend the gathering sharing and praying for one another to overcome these pressures and ask for the power of God to be revealed.

Discuss

Read 2 Corinthians 4: 7-12

Discuss the "treasure" and these "jars of clay." How would you describe or explain the treasure of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you find comfort in being a jar of clay? Re you frustrated by being a jar of clay? What is the promise of Jesus for the destiny of these bodies we now call home?

Paul goes on to say

- Pressed, but not crushed.
- Perplexed, but not in despair.
- Persecuted, not abandoned.
- Struck down, but not destroyed.

This passage does not ignore the problems of life- there is pressure, perplexity, etc. But it is wonderfully hopeful. *How can we be pressed, but not feel crushed? Perplexity, but not despair? How do you stay focused on the good and stay faithful in the midst of pressure?*

Read Matthew 26:36-46

Perhaps the greatest story of "grace under pressure" is Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Read the garden story and examine Jesus' prayer.

Why does Jesus want his friends to go with him? Have you ever been left down by friends or family? Hav you ever prayed for something and not received the answer you wanted? What was that experience? How did it impact your faith?

Jesus experienced something we need never to experience: the pressure of propitiation. Propitiation is defined as: *the act of appeasing or making well-disposed a deity, thus incurring divine favor or avoiding divine retribution.*

Romans 3: 23-25 (ESV) 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

John Stott writes that propitiation "does not make God gracious...God does not love us because Christ died for us, Christ died for us because God loves us" (The Cross of Christ)

How is propitiation a comforting doctrine of our faith, demonstrating the love and grace of our God?

Apply

Pressure can reveal the power of God, the promise of Jesus to be with us, and the presence of the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave.

What is pressure revealing in you right now? Where, or to whom, can you go for help? Do you have anyone that will go with you into your darkest hour?

Pray together, as Jesus hoped, to endure the pressures you are facing.