



Sermon Discussion Guide

Finding Treasure in Darkness Getting Through What You're Going Through – Part 6

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"I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name." Isaiah 45:3 (NIV)

"Getting through what we're going through" sometimes requires of us "finding treasure in darkness." Isaiah 45:3 above teaches that God gives us "riches hidden in secret places" so that we may know that he is God, who summons us by name. God has concealed treasure in the darkness of suffering, for example, so that we may know that God has the power to intervene during trials. The fact that God "summons us by name" reassures us that God will be close to us even in our darkest moments. Knowing these truths about God leads us to worship and praise God even in pain.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

1. Most of us are afraid of the dark, and nobody likes to go through dark times. But in Isaiah 45:3 above, God makes an important promise. As you read this verse, what is God promising to you about going through hard times? Why is he making that promise?

"But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." Job 23:10 (NIV)

2. When we go through times of darkness, we often feel lost and afraid because we don't know what lies ahead. But God already knows what will happen to us. Discuss in your group how this verse offers hope for you when you are going through difficulties. How is God testing you? How will you "come forth as gold"?

"The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: 'I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble...'" Isaiah 57:15a (NLT)

3. How does Isaiah 57:15a above characterize those with whom God intervenes in his high and holy place? How may we know that God has the power to intervene in our darkness? How have you asked God to intervene?

"...so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find him. He doesn't play hide-and-seek with us. He's not remote; he's near." Acts 17:27b (MSG)

4. Think about this verse and tough times you have had. Does knowing that God wants you to find him change the way you see the darkness? Does this make the darkness easier to bear? What hope do you find in this verse?

"At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.'" Job 1:20-21 (NIV)

5. Pain is a guaranteed part of our lives. This scripture challenges us to praise God in times of darkness, great pain and hopelessness. Talk about a trial in your life and how you were able to praise God through it. If you have not been able to praise God during trials, talk about what you have learned from this verse about ways to praise God in trials. How will this change your relationship with God?
6. Look up Habakkuk 3:17-19. Talk about this verse and the treasure of worshipping through our darkest times, and about what this verse says our Sovereign Lord, our strength, does for us. What is meant by, "God enables us to tread on the heights?"

Diving Deeper (optional)

"Even when walking through the dark valley of death I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me guiding, guarding all the way." Psalm 23:4 (TLB)

Psalm 23:4 famously teaches us that God is with us even when we're "walking through the dark valley of death." What testimony do you have of God's presence during even the darkest times? How do past experiences of God giving you "treasures in darkness" encourage you as you go through dark times now?

REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.

Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- **Icebreaker:** Describe a fun time or game played in darkness – perhaps when you were a child – during which you discovered a pleasant surprise.
- **Goals:** Understand that God knows us by name and that he is with us even in times of darkness. Know that God provides hidden treasures in darkness that can lead us to worship him even in pain.
- **Final Prayer:** Heavenly Father, help us to get through what we’re going through; help us to find hidden treasures even in darkness. May we know that you have the power to intervene in our darkness, and may you be close to us so that we can praise and worship you even through our trials.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.