

IN THE MEANTIME

PART 2: A Purpose and a Promise

INTRODUCTION

Every once in a while, we run into people stuck in unchangeable, unalterable, in-the-meantime circumstances who get to the place where they're able and willing to receive their circumstances, their afflictions, their illnesses, their losses, and their disabilities as coming from the hand of their heavenly Father. How do these people maintain extraordinary faith despite extraordinarily difficult circumstances? Where do they find the peace that characterizes their lives?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think people assume that faith in God will remove adversity from life? Have you ever made that assumption? If so, how did it influence your relationship with God?
2. Talk about a time when you or someone you know faced difficult circumstances and God was silent. How did that experience affect your faith in the short term? How did it affect your faith in the long term?
3. Is it difficult for you to accept that challenging circumstances can come from the hand of a loving God? Why or why not?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. What would it look like for you to "delight in weakness" for the sake of Jesus? How would it change the way you respond to adversity?
5. Do you feel permission to plea with God to take away your difficult circumstances? Do you believe he responds to that kind of prayer? Why or why not?
6. What is the "thorn in your side," the ongoing struggle or challenge that you can't change and about which you need to accept God's grace in order to move forward? What can you do to begin to view that "thorn" as a gift that comes with a purpose and a promise from your heavenly Father? How can this group support you?

MOVING FORWARD

If you believe God can change your circumstances but chooses not to, you have the option to receive this from him as a gift with a purpose and a promise: *grace*. If that sounds absurd remember your salvation—the salvation of the world—hung in the balance of a similar decision made by your Savior the night before his crucifixion.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Luke 22:42