



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 6

November 13th & 14th, 2010

Small Group Warm-Up

This weekend Pastor James talked about our annual Christmas Conspiracy offering. Our donations will go toward caring for victims of human trafficking, providing housing for people living in the dirt in T.J., providing school supplies for needy children, providing clean drinking water for people in developing nations, providing care for AIDS orphans in Uganda, providing resources for the homeless in San Diego County, and providing resources for launching churches in Pasco, WA, Blacksburg, VA, Crowley, LA and a third EastLake Church campus in San Diego County. We're asking you to pray about what you can sacrifice in order to make a difference in our world in 2011.

Opening Prayer:

Father God, thank you for providing for us. Show us what sacrifice we can make so that others can receive a hand up this year.

Discussion Questions:

As we close our S.H.A.P.E. series, we are focusing on how God can take all of our life Experiences—even the bad ones—and bring something good from them, when we offer them to him.

We have all had difficult experiences and shared the difficulties of those close to us. Pastor Mike began his message by establishing this premise: There is a God; he is good; I can trust him.

- Have you ever struggled, or are you currently struggling with any of these statements? If yes, circle what you are struggling with—this will be just between you and God.
- If you are struggling, don't panic or abandon your faith journey. Remember that spiritual growth is a process that doesn't happen all at once.

Read Romans 8:28

This verse is a promise to those of us who have chosen to trust in God. It tells us we can KNOW that God is actively at work for our good, even when we are facing bad circumstances.

- Fill in the blank on this sentence: God, I want to trust you to make something good out of this difficult circumstance in my life _____
- If you are comfortable, share what you wrote with one other person.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

In this passage we learn that Paul and his companions faced incredibly difficult circumstances, "...so that we despaired even of life."

- What are some of the good outcomes from their difficulties that are mentioned in this passage?

Read Genesis 50:15-21

Joseph was a man who faced many difficult life experiences. His problems began when his jealous brothers sold him into slavery at a young age. When Joseph was reunited with his brothers later in life, he forgave them and acknowledged that God had taken his bad experiences (even the ones they caused) and used them for great good.

- If possible, share an example of when God has taken one of your bad experiences and used it for good.

Read Proverbs 25:11-12 in The Message version, if possible.

Pastor Mike said that we don't have time to learn everything we need to know through our own experiences. We need to recognize the value of learning from other people's experiences as well.

- Share something you learned through a friend's wise advice, or from a "timely reprimand."

Closing Prayer: Lord, thank you for being involved in every part of our lives—even the ugly and difficult parts. Help us to find our comfort and strength in you this week. We know that you are good, and that we can trust you.

