

THE ROAD OF Love

FACILITATOR GUIDE

NOTE TO FACILITATORS: Make sure you have the email addresses or cellphone numbers of each of your class members. This week send a word of encouragement to them. Here's a verse that might encourage this week.

**Psalm 103:11 — For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;**

Keep in touch with your people through the week. It's really important during this time of Covid.

CPC HAPPENINGS... (Leaders, please share with your group. We want to do everything to keep people connected to the entire church family.)

Christmas @ CPC

CPC is planning for three Christmas service options this year:

Saturday, December 19 @ 5 pm. and

Sunday, December 20 @ 8:45 & 10:45 am. (regular service times)

Baptism Opportunity

As of right now, the next CPC Baptism Service is planned for Sunday, January 10. If you would like to participate, please go to the church website (yourcpc.church/events) to sign up.

DEALING WITH PRESSURE

The odds against bowling a perfect 300 are about 225,000 to one. After bowling a perfect game, one bowler collapsed out of shock from the immense pressure. Another bowler was just one roll away from a perfect game. He just needed one more strike, but the pressure was so great, he couldn't allow himself to face the possibility of missing it. So instead of rolling the ball, he packed his shoes and ball and walked out—never again setting foot in a bowling alley.

Do you handle pressure very well?

Does the pressure of failure ever keep you from doing something, or from finishing something you've started?

Look at the pressure Mary and Joseph had to endure...

Luke 2:1-5 — In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. 2 This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. 3 So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David.

In his message this week, Pastor Chris listed many dangers that Mary and Joseph could have encountered on their way to Bethlehem.

List some of the difficulties they may have faced. [People gossiping/not understanding the situation. Lions, wolves, bears, hyenas, bandits, cold and possibly rainy weather, and being left by the caravan.]

Why do you think God chose Mary and Joseph to raise His Son Jesus? [They were righteous, good people, but also they had to have been very determined and very brave to face all the obstacles that they did. Also, their love for God had to be stronger than their own desire for comfort.]

List some of the things you are dealing with right now in your life.

Can you honestly say that your love for God is greater than the obstacles that you face?

Are you more or less willing to face your obstacles if it means allowing God's will to take shape in your life?

Is it possible to get away from pressure? [No! Pressure follows you! As long as we live with other imperfect people, have deadlines, and things break down, we will feel pressure.]

Mary and Joseph may have been left by a caravan of other people traveling the same way. Have you ever had people who have left you in the middle of your problems? If so, why do think others will abandon you? [They probably don't know how to deal with their own problems, and don't want to deal with the troubles of another person. Many people are more interested in just getting themselves through life and don't take the time to help others along the way. There are some people who you will meet in life that just won't be there for you. Some others will seem like/ talk like/ act like they will, but when trouble comes, they will leave. Don't hold a grudge. Just know that some people can't walk the

journey that God is leading you on. They haven't been called to it. God has put you on this journey for a reason. There may be a few people who will be there for you. Cherish them. But know there may come a time when they can't really help you even as much as they would like to. There comes a time in your journey when you have to realize that only God is going to get you through this difficult time—not even your spouse, your parents, or your best friends can help you. It all comes down to how much you love God and want to see His will accomplished in your life. THEN you can walk into the destiny He has planned just for you.]

What do you hang on to when you go through difficult times? [Each other. God's Word. Prayer. Trust in God.]

EMOTIONS VS. INTELLECT

Pastor Chris described “emotional faith” as being a faith that we can feel. It lifts us up and it makes us feel good and things are just right. Then he compared it to “intellectual knowledge,” where we can rationally look at a situation and have an understanding.

Why would an emotional faith only have failed Mary and Joseph? [Nothing about it would have felt good or even right. This situation was not uplifting. It was hard!]

Why would an intellectual knowledge only have failed Mary and Joseph? [Because nothing about this made good rational sense. They would not have been able to figure out what God was doing.]

When the situation doesn't “feel” good, when it doesn't seem to make good sense, and you can't figure out what God is up to, where do you turn?

You have to focus on the LOVE OF GOD.

1 John 4:8-10 — ... God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

[The love of God is a basic truth. If you can get it into your heart, it should be the one thought that sustains you through the difficult seasons of life.]

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Isaiah 9:6 — For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on His shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Last week we looked at the title “Wonderful Counselor.” This week we look at the two titles of “Mighty God and Eternal Father.” These seem to be two sides of the same coin.

What does Mighty God conjure in your mind? [“Mighty God” suggests a warrior, strong in battle.]

What does Everlasting Father mean to you? [“Father” gives us the image of a loving father with His arms outstretched toward us.]

How do these images refuel your faith? [Gives us hope that God will fight our battles for us and always be there to love us.]

Can you see a good side to your difficulties?

In Pastor Chris’ sermon, he pointed out the two sides of each of these situations. List what is the negative side and what is the positive side.

Mary — [Difficult situation / Honored by God]

Joseph — [Forced into responsibilities to protect and provide / Honored to raise God’s Son]

Census — [An additional hardship at a bad time / Moved them to the place where the prophecy of Messiah’s birth could come true]

The Journey — [Another hardship fraught with multiple difficulties / Would have drawn Mary and Joseph closer together and closer in their relationship with God]

The census came a really bad time. I’m sure you’ve experienced days when everything seemed to go wrong and then....one more thing happens on top of that! However, the prophecies had stated that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph were in Nazareth. The call for the census to be taken would have simply been a way to move the couple to the place where they needed to be in order to fulfill what the prophets had spoken regarding the baby.

They were moved in **ALIGNMENT** for their **ASSIGNMENT**.

Have you stopped to consider that the problems you are encountering right now in your life may be God moving you in the direction you need to go to fulfill His will in your life?

How does that thought make you feel? **[Empower you? Motivate you? Scare you? Build your faith?]**

How does remembering how much God loves you help you to see the “flip side” of your situation? **[Romans 8:28 — We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.]**

When Mary and Joseph held the baby in their arms, do you think they remembered how difficult the journey was to get there?

At the end of your difficult season, God may have a blessing far greater than you have ever imagined! Just hold on!

James 1:2-4 — Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

PRAYER TIME

- Give God praise for the trials He has brought you through in your past.
- Thank Him for His great love for you, that even before you knew Him He knew and loved you.
- Ask God to help you see the good in every difficult situation.
- Pray that God will show you the assignment that He has in mind for you.
- Pray for the difficult situations that the others in your group may be going through right now.