



When you're weak.

ICEBREAKER:

Can you remember a time as a child when someone comforted you while you were hurting?

WEEK 1

1. We heard the incredible story of Joy Veron who became paralyzed while saving her children's lives. What part of that story—and of Joy's strength in God—most spoke to you?
2. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Paul the Apostle describes his "thorn in the flesh" as a physical condition with daily torment. What pain, weakness, or discouragement is a "thorn in the flesh" in your life presently?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9 to discover God's answer to Paul's request for healing. In verse 10, Paul describes his response as "delight" to suffer in weakness and hardship. What would this look like in your life for you to submit and agree with God's promise like Paul did?
4. Is it encouraging to know that Paul's thorn was not a punishment? Paul's pain was not because God did not like Paul, or even because Paul lacked faith to be healed. How does this speak to you and your "thorn?"

GOD'S STRENGTH + MY WEAKNESS > MY STRENGTH + NO WEAKNESS

5. If this claim is true, what weakness or hurt in your life could be combined with God's strength to be greater than a pain-free life?

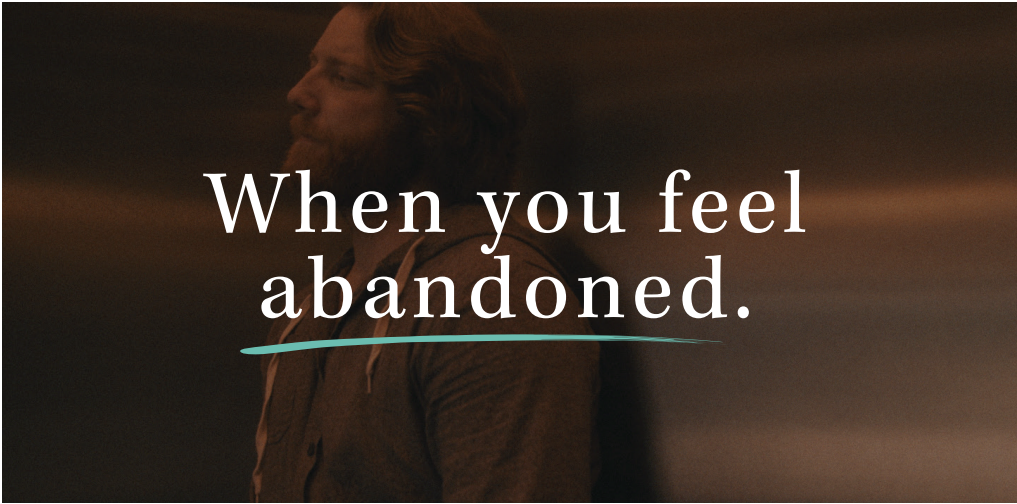
ICEBREAKER:

Share with the group something you've accomplished that you felt good about. Maybe it was a health-related goal, tackling a home renovation, school-related accomplishment, making some DIY shelves, restoring a car, etc.

When you doubt.

WEEK 2

1. There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible, and beginning in just the third chapter of the whole book, God explains that a contamination has infected and broken our world (Read Genesis 3:17-19). Where do you see glimpses of good in our world, but also of contamination?
2. If you labored to create a perfect masterpiece, how would you feel if it became broken and polluted? How do you suspect God feels about His creation?
3. One writer described the present state of humanity as "a glorious ruin." "Glorious" because the echoes of God and His goodness are still seen and felt, but "ruin" because of the infection of evil at every level. What are the implications in your life of living in a "glorious ruin" as it relates to your health, emotions, and relationships?
4. Read Romans 5:8. In the sermon we heard about a rescue plan to save Chilean miners who were trapped beneath rubble. If there were a plan to deliver you out of this suffering and into a world of perfect peace, would you want to know about this plan? With Romans 5:8 in mind, how would you describe God's rescue plan?
5. Have you ever had a moment in your life when you trusted Christ to rescue you? If so describe it.
6. Read John 3:16-17 and 1 Peter 2:24. What stands out to you about this exchange of God's strength for our weakness? When you encounter pain or injustice this week, remind yourself that God came to resolve that issue. What are some ways you might do this?



When you feel abandoned.

ICEBREAKER:

Share about a memorable time when you forgot someone or something. How did that make you feel and how do you think it made the other person feel?

WEEK 3

1. In this week's message we talked about the times when we feel like Jesus is not responding or helping us in our pain. Read John 11:1-6. Describe, in your own words, how you think Lazarus felt as he waited for Jesus to come heal him, but then learned Jesus was not coming. Have you ever felt some of the same things Lazarus likely felt? If so, when?
2. Read John 11:35-44. What happens in this passage? What does it tell us about Jesus?
3. Have you ever felt like God has let your suffering go on too long? Is this a feeling you are currently experiencing? If so please share or describe the situation.
4. In the sermon we learned that God is working for us despite our doubt, frustration, and confusion. Do you believe that God weeps about the brokenness and pain in your life? How can you remind yourself and each other of that truth this week?
5. In the sermon we heard John share a story of taking his young son to the Emergency Room and having to hold him down against his will, but for his own good. John loves his son, but he had to act in a way that his son could not understand. How does this true story offer insights into how God is good, can be "with you," and can be "for you," even in the midst of your suffering? Who can you encourage with this truth about God this week?

ICEBREAKER:

When you are looking for peace and calm, what types of activities or routines do you go to?

When you lack peace.



WEEK 4

1. We learned that through sin and self-reliance we can unintentionally choke the work of the Spirit in our lives. Was that idea new to you? Are there any areas of spiritual debris in your life that may presently be blocking the comfort God desires to give you through His Spirit?
2. Read John 14:25-27. We learned that true inner peace doesn't come from circumstances. It comes from the Holy Spirit, who lives in every Christian. Where, in your life, have you lately been seeking to achieve inner peace through some change in outer circumstances?
3. John said that when our outer circumstances are restless, God's spirit can breathe joy, peace, patience, and faithfulness. He can breathe it into you. Share about a time in the past where you have felt this life-giving breath. Where in your life currently could you use this peace?
4. Read Galatians 5:16 and Ephesians 4:30. We learned two steps to walk in the Spirit: "claim it" and "clear the way." How can you begin to take these steps today?
5. The sequoia tree is a massive tree commonly found in the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The tree can grow up to 300 feet high, but it needs the harshness of winter to help it grow. How can you seek God's peace today, regardless of the season or circumstances of life you find yourself in? How might God be trying to grow you during this current season?



When you can't go on.

ICEBREAKER:
Where do you like to
go to spend time
alone?

WEEK 5

1. Read Matthew 26:36-39. In Gethsemane, Jesus stumbled, fell, and was “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” How does it make you feel to know that it’s not unspiritual to be troubled, distressed, or overwhelmed? Had you ever thought of Jesus this way? Have you ever fallen on your face in prayer, like Jesus, and poured your heart out to God? What was that experience like?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. What does this passage say about God? What does it say about you?
3. Your pain can become a platform to serve others. How might your greatest tragedy become your greatest triumph? What tragedy, set back, pain, or discouragement do you need to surrender to God so that He can bring good from it?
4. “Your greatest contribution in life may result from your greatest pain or weakness surrendered.” What do you think of this statement?
5. Have you ever viewed your suffering as an opportunity for your greatest contribution? Who is someone you know who has embodied this truth?
6. In the sermon we learned that “No one else can share hope with the hurting people in your life like you can.” How does that make you feel? Who are the people you will prayerfully consider sharing your story with?