



Overview:

COVID. Politics. Injustice. Learn how to stay positive in a negative world.

Lessons:

1. The Bright Side of God's Kingdom
2. Weaponizing Praise When You're Feeling Down
3. How to Pray When Life Gets Hard
4. Parenting on the Bright Side



THE BRIGHT SIDE OF GOD'S KINGDOM

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TALKING POINTS

In Jesus' most famous sermon he teaches his followers what it means to be truly "blessed". Followers of Jesus should be the happiest people in the world, even when the world is falling apart.

- There's a reality in _____ that looks nothing like what's happening here on earth. The key to experiencing that reality is to _____ to God's kingdom, not to try building our own. **Matthew 5:3,5,10, Isaiah 61:1-2**
- It's not our job to withdraw from the world but to be a _____ to it. We do that by living according to God's _____, reflecting the heart behind his rules. **Matthew 5:14,16, Matthew 5:43-45**
- Living "_____" lives is a fundamentally different way to approach the world. It frees followers of Jesus from the fear and anxiety that dominates the hearts of _____. **Matthew 6:31-33**

DISCUSSION

1. *Make a list of the things that stress you out most right now. How do you typically respond to stress?*
2. *Come up with three words to describe the state of our world today. Why is it important to remember that heaven will be nothing like earth?*
3. *Read Matthew 5:3,5,10. What does Jesus mean that the poor are blessed? How about the persecuted for doing right?*
4. *Read Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus came to bring a message of hope and light. How does this passage encourage you when you're facing darker times?*
5. *Read Matthew 5:14,16. How have you seen Christians misrepresent Jesus and his message on social media or in other interactions? How have you tried to be a light in your community?*
6. *Read Matthew 5:43-45. What does it look like to love your enemy? Share a time you were able to show love to someone who didn't deserve it.*
7. *In your opinion, what does a "Kingdom first" lifestyle look like? In what areas do you need to grow?*
8. *Read Matthew 6:31-33. Why don't we need to be gripped by fear and anxiety? How have you seen God provide for you in the past?*

WEAPONIZING PRAISE

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TALKING POINTS

When bad news tries to dominate our lives, we can be optimistic because of the hope we have in Christ.

- When we can't change our _____ we can change our _____. Praise can break the chains that imprison us. **Acts 16:22-26**
- What consumes our minds controls our lives. The thoughts you _____ will grow and the thoughts you _____ will die. **Proverbs 17:22**
- Choosing to praise God in _____ strengthens our faith and prepares us for future trials. And reminds us that the final _____ is bright and sure. **Philippians 4:8, 1 Peter 1:3-4, Psalm 34:1-3**

DISCUSSION

1. *Share about a hard season in your life. How did you respond to that stress? How did your attitude towards it affect you in every area of your life?*
2. *Read Acts 16:22-24. Put yourself in this story. How would you react if you were jailed for sharing your faith? How have you responded to injustice in the past?*
3. *Read Proverbs 17:22. Share about a person that endured great hardship with a positive attitude. What allowed them to do that and how did their attitude affect those around them?*
4. *Why do our thoughts have the ability to make or break us? How have you seen negative thoughts derail your life? How have you seen positive thoughts help you to overcome hardship?*
5. *Read Philippians 4:8. Give some examples of "admirable" thoughts that you could focus on even when your circumstances are dire.*
6. *Read 1 Peter 1:3-4. How does remembering your future hope help you to face current hardships? What will you do to incorporate more praise to God moving forward?*

HOW TO PRAY WHEN LIFE GETS HARD

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TALKING POINTS

When Israel hit rock bottom, the prophet Habakkuk modeled how to pray with optimism even when things aren't going so well. You can pray with confident optimism when you base your prayer on the character and promises of God.

- Remember who God is and what he has done for you. When you speak out what God has done, you build _____ in what God can do. **Habakkuk 3:1-2**
- Patiently submit to God's timing, even when he doesn't meet your _____. Develop an attitude of _____ trust in God. **Habakkuk 3:16**
- Stay confident in God no matter what happens. Remember that God is always _____ you and _____ you. **Habakkuk 3:17-19, Romans 8:31, Hebrews 13:5-6**

DISCUSSION

1. *Share about a time you were desperate for God to answer your prayers. How did it turn out?*
2. *Share a time God miraculously answered a prayer of yours. How did that impact your faith?*
3. *Read Habakkuk 3:1-2. Identify all that Habakkuk identifies about God in this passage. Why is it important to remember past answered prayers when faced with current issues?*
4. *How have you seen God at work in your finances, marriage, family, etc?*
5. *Read Habakkuk 3:16. What does "quiet trust" look like? Why do you think God makes us wait for his answers?*
6. *Read Habakkuk 3:17-19 and Hebrews 13:5-6. How can we rejoice in the Lord even when our situation is dire? Why is God still worthy of our praise no matter the challenges we face?*
7. *Name 3 things you are thankful for today. Take a minute to praise God for those things and see how it changes your mindset!*

PARENTING ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

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TALKING POINTS

The positive side of parenting is praising, listening, and encouraging. Love creates the environment that gradually opens the heart of our kids to receive truth.

- God the Father modeled the _____ side of parenting every time he spoke publicly about Jesus. If the Father thought it was important to _____ his Son, our kids need it even more. **Matthew 3:16-17**
- God created every human with a need for love-and it starts in childhood. _____ words work alongside _____ to build character and confidence. **Proverbs 16:24, Ephesians 4:32**
- Affirmation takes talk, time and touch. There should be a quality to your affirmation that is _____, _____ and _____ to each kid.

DISCUSSION

1. *Would you say you are more natural on the “positive” side or the “negative” side of parenting? Explain your answer.*
2. *Read Matthew 3:16-17. Why do you think God made those statements for others to hear? Why is public praise important for your kids?*
3. *Read Proverbs 16:24. How have you seen your affirming words help your kids? How have you seen your negative words impact your kids?*
4. *Read Ephesians 4:32. What are some of the bad habits you have formed as a parent in response to frustrating behaviors in your kids? What is a more tender-hearted way to respond when you’re frustrated?*
5. *What has/will happen if you tend more toward discipline than praise? What has/will happen if you tend more toward praise than discipline? What is a healthy balance of both?*
6. *Identify the kind of affirmation each of your kids need from you. Why is it important to affirm each of your kids according to their needs? What will your intentional affirmation speak to them?*

