

# PILGRIM HOME GROUPS

The smaller groups in our church community are inside our homes where we go deeper, build friendships, and walk out the Christian life with each other.

## HOME CHURCH/SMALL GROUP/CLASS GUIDE

1. "Breaking the Ice" question: (group facilitator)
2. Check-ins: What's been happening in your week(s) since last meeting? Introduce yourself if new/new people in group, check in with each other
3. Care: Needs in the group; name needs and have sentence prayers (short sentences/open ended, not long-winded) at end of the gathering time
4. Compassion: What compassion work is the group planning? Are you inviting your neighbors to join?
5. Group Announcements (church-wide and group-only)
6. Dig in: Any reflections, discernments, disagreements from last week's teaching (or since you last met)? Look at the Bible passage(s) again and read some of them out loud in the group (and other verses that may have been mentioned). What jumps out at you? Discuss some of the questions as a group.
7. End and Homework: Final questions, prayer huddles for personal requests. Consider breaking into small groups (huddles) of 2-4, by gender, if large enough.

## DISCUSSION:

1. Have you picked a compassion/service opportunity? It could be something someone is already connected with in your group...
2. On the surface level do you find the idea of control or relationship more appealing, why?
3. How do our desires shape our views of God?
4. Reread some of the passages from the teaching. Talk through them: What do you think the context was? How is it similar to our lives? What do you think the Spirit is saying through it now?
5. In Luke 11:17-23, Jesus is the stronger man. What does this passage tell us about the spiritual situation we find ourselves in and how has the cross changed this?
6. If evil is simply a "dark will" part of God, what does it say about our views of sin and evil?
7. What would you say to a loved one who experienced a significant loss? Does the type of loss change this? How? (eg. horrible accident claims a child, a family member is kidnapped, experience of war, cyclone/hurricane, etc.)
8. What aspect of God's character do you find most comforting? And what do you find most "forced" (e.g. "What I think I'm supposed to say, but this is really what I think/feel")? Other...

## PRAYER REQUESTS THIS WEEK:

# *The Thinking Christian*

# JUSTIFYING GOD

## TERMS:

- + Theodicy - Lit. "God justice" "justifying God." How do we reconcile the idea of a good God and evil?
- + Sovereignty - supreme power or authority

## BIG IDEA:

- + There are two basic Christian approaches to the problem of evil:
  - The Blueprint and the Warzone.**
- + These two are directly related to two ways of understanding God's sovereignty:
  - Particular or/and General**
- + Most of us use "Blueprint" bumper sticker language. However, when it comes to choices we act like the warzone.
- + This is because the blueprint sounds holy and right, but the warzone is the reality we live in.

## UNPACKING THE BIG IDEA

- + You are in grave danger if you look at life as if you have no say-so and that everything that happens is "God's mysterious will."

- + God of pure will/freedom OR
- + God of pure love/goodness

- + If one chooses to embrace one or the other, there are difficulties.
  - + **Blueprint:** Are God's commands as to what is good and evil not really true? If God defines good as a moving target, how do we ever really make any good decisions?
  - + **Warzone/Free will:** Is the pain really worth the risk? How long does God wait before ending the freewill project? Does he ever or does his love have no end?

## Do we try to force a reconciliation between these two views of evil and God?

Do we believe this?

1 John 1:5 Also: Hebrews 1:3, Colossians. 1:15-20, 2:9-10

Two passages and some implications:  
Romans 8:28

Luke 11:20-23

Our problem is with human views of what God should be like.

### Identifying Our Problem With God's Will

1. Particular Sovereignty
2. General Sovereignty

Particular Sovereignty (possible issues): redefining evil as good, moving toward a complete denial of personal responsibility in the world now, saying one thing about God's goodness while never really knowing what good and light is, confusion.

**What about accidents and natural evils? Seeing nature as more than a closed system**

+ "Peace be still" and "An enemy has done this"

**Nature/creation involves limits**

a. Created things are dual - not spirit/body (they are both) BUT potentially good/evil.

b. Randomness alone is not enough of an answer.

*Man...trusted God was love indeed*

*And love Creation's final law--*

*Tho' nature, red in tooth and claw*

*With ravine, shrek'd against his creed*

*-Tennyson, In Memoriam*

+ "(God) is not the puppet master of men or of matter,"

This element of chance is crucial if the creation is to contain certain desirous qualities." (J. Polkinghorne, 281)

+ If the world is separate from God in material/stuff - it has to have randomness. Novelty, other forms of life cannot be generated without it.

**There is openness in the creation process and it reconciles our view with contemporary science; it also provides a way out of the otherwise unsolvable problem of evil. The alternative to this is:**

1. God exercises meticulous, exhaustive control over the world and therefore that means either:

- a. Disorder and evil are merely an illusion; or
- b. The CREATOR is not perfectly good

IF these are NOT acceptable, then it forces us to accept that:

2. There is in creation, an openness to disorder, which means

- a. Beings other than God must have say-so in what happens; AND
- b. The origin of everything that conflicts with Jesus must lie here.

### PRACTICAL TAKE OUTS

1 John 4:1-4, Luke 11:17-23

1. We can and should call evil, evil and not simply another aspect of God!
2. We should fight, resist, and revolt through prayer, loving action, and naming evil as such. It is NOT God's perfect plan!
3. We love first. We leave final judgment to God. (We do NOT try to locate God's judgment in the storm).
4. Worship and prayer matter more than you suspect.

### Bringing the rule of God into our situation!

1. Systemic evil is the most powerful.
2. Dealing with evil on the personal/small level.
3. Some warnings: not all sickness, problems, or issues are directly connected to an evil spirit, BUT every issue *does* involve a spiritual component.
4. Confession of sin: agreeing with what God says about it and confession of your God-given worth.
5. Become so rooted in the Church, Word and worship that you can hear the leadings of the Spirit
6. Pray for your neighbors, your family, your church
7. Get prayer when you have a problem/issue.