1. Read slowly several times 1 Samuel 17:38-51
   - Sum up in a couple of sentences why you think this is in the Bible. Why did the Holy Spirit choose it and what is its application to us?
   - Think about David’s answer to Goliath. What is the key to his fearless courage?

2. Consider this quote:
   Ann Landers received an average of 10,000 letters a month. When asked what was the #1 problem people struggled against, she said “fear.” She answered instantly: “Fear. Fear of everything imaginable.”
   That is why the most frequent commandment in the Bible is “Fear not”!
   And of course, that means fear is never the voice of God speaking to us. If we are commanded not to fear, then fear can never be the voice of God, can it?
   - Is that quote true? If it is, why? If not, why do you disagree?

3. Consider this:
   Fear is like a boa constrictor. It wraps itself around us and squeezes all the joy out of life. It is impossible for anyone to be full of fear and joy at the same time! Fear is like spraying Round Up on joy.
   Listen to a fearful person and you will not hear them mention any blessings they have. Fear makes us forget our blessings. Conversations with a panicked person is merely a monologue about fear. And the boa constrictor of fear squeezes the last drop of joy out of their day. FEAR IS A THIEF - IT STEALS OUR JOY.
   Sports Illustrated had an article about why it takes more than talent to be great in the pros. The article said athletes will never be great unless they conquer fear. A quarterback must stand in the pocket while huge men claw their way toward him to crush him. A receiver must go up into the air for a pass knowing that the defense wants to cut him in half. No one will ever live their dreams if they live their fears.
   A woman hates her job. She dreams of owning her own business and being her own boss. But she could lose money. Fear keeps her from living her dream.
   A man fears the commitments of marriage. He’s seen friends miserable in marriage. But no one can live their dreams if they live their fears.
   - Underline the most important sentence in your opinion and say how it applies to life.
4. Consider this quote about the Coronavirus.

   My guess is that for most of us our Goliath is the Coronavirus. Every day the media brings us more news and the Coronavirus roars at us like Goliath. I don’t need to itemize its dangers. You know them well, and the truth is many people are panicked with fear.

   Now I need to emphasize that “fear not” does not mean be foolish and not take precautions. People walking hand-in-hand in San Francisco aren’t demonstrating courage. They are demonstrating foolishness.

   I’ll give you a personal example. One night when I was a pastor in Oakland, there was loud pounding on the door of our home near midnight. Through the peephole I could see a giant of a man with arms the size of my calves. And he had in his hand a huge combat knife pointed at the door.

   Susie and I had 2 babies sleeping upstairs. I did not say “Honey, let’s open the door and not be afraid.”

   No. That’s why God gave me a 12 gauge shotgun. I told Susie to call 911 and I got my 12 gauge and loaded it with 3 shells. And I stood in front of the door in the living room waiting for the guy to bust through it.

   I was ready to give him a Christian burial at no charge for my services.

   Trusting God does not mean we do nothing. God gave us a brain to think of precautions and He gave me a 12 gauge to protect my family. Fortunately the police came in only a couple of minutes and saved that man’s life.

   “Fear not” does not mean to be irresponsible. It means fear doesn’t change anything. It simply ruins today and makes you no fun to be around.

   Life is too short to live it afraid of giants. This month it’s the Coronavirus, next month it’s something else. It can become a habit. So what does David teach us about facing our Goliath.

   • Summarize in a sentence the point of that quote.

   • Underline the most important sentence and explain how it applies to this epidemic?

5. The media is selling fear. They may have their reasons. But what is important is how we handle fear when it hisses at us.
Consider the following:

   Fear is always an option but never mandatory.

   You may be afraid of spiders; your husband isn’t. Your husband is afraid of taking risks; you are not. You may be afraid of the Coronavirus, that it may kill you or someone you love; your friend is not afraid of that.

   Panic is when our imagination is totally out of control. You imagine “What if” and you think of the worst case scenario. ‘What if’ – that questions launches a panic attack.

   Imagination is God’s gift to build beautiful buildings, to have the marriage of our dreams, to solve problems. Imagination is a gift to imagine how things could be better.

   But fear grabs our imagination and uses it to horriblize and torment us by imagining the worst happening.

   But fear is a waste of time, isn’t it? It changes nothing. Fear is like shoveling air.

   Conquering fear starts with realizing that it is not mandatory. The proof is that David is not afraid of Goliath when everyone else is.
Just as there are many people who are not panicked about the Coronavirus though most people are.

We will never win over fear as long as we think we can’t help but be afraid. We start to win when we realize we have a choice.

Start asking yourself why would I choose to be full of fear when it’s like shoveling air. Why not be prudent, take precautions but be full of faith in Jesus instead of full of fear?

That’s David. David said to Goliath in verse 45 “You come to me with spear and sword but I come in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head.” (1 Samuel 17:45-46)

David is confident he is not alone. And we should be confident we are not alone against our giants either. Hebrews 13 verse 5 is where Jesus says “I will never ever leave you. I am always with you.”

We have God on our side against the Coronavirus. And that’s why David repeatedly says in the Psalms “I will not be afraid. I will not. I will not.”

We can’t be lazy and be at peace. We must make up our mind that we will not be afraid. God is with us.

You worship an Almighty God. Nothing is impossible for your God. Your God says He is by your side. Your God is Almighty and He is on your side. Do you believe that?

Then say to yourself: therefore I will not be afraid of the Coronavirus no matter how much it hisses at me.

Underline the most important sentence and say why. What difference does it make in handling fear. (Notice: The virus is not to be taken lightly. It can kill. But so can driving your car or smoking, and we still leave the house.)

If fear is not mandatory, and recklessness is unwise, what is our option

6. Maybe the most important part of the sermon is this quote:

Still, how do you do it?. How can we focus on God?

Well, a very important principle is The law of exposure.

The law of exposure says that what we expose ourself to will determine how we think. And that’s why if we’re using the mandate to shelter in place to watch the news almost constantly about the virus, we are making a big mistake. The law of exposure says that this will inevitably make us fearful. We are feeding our mind with horribilizing thoughts. And the media is intent upon capturing our attention and the best way is with fear. Sure, there is some good information in it but if we are constantly exposing ourself to the media rather than the promises of God and the Word of God, the result will be panic in us rather than peace. I urge us to spend at least as much time in the Word of God as we do on TV.

Without a doubt the biggest surprise in this passage is that David runs at Goliath! Not away from but he runs at the giant.

And the entire army of Israel covered their eyes expecting the worst.

Goliath can’t believe it. No one has ever run at him. Everyone always runs away from him except David.

Swish swish. David twirls the slingshot above his head and launches the stone and hits Goliath between the eyes and he falls like a giant redwood. And David cuts his head off.

How do you run at what everyone else is running from?
Only if you focus on God’s promises and not the Coronavirus. God has given us 7,000 promises in the Bible. Like:
  Isaiah 41:10 “Fear not for I am with you. I will help you.”
  Psalm 23:4 “Even though I walk through the darkest valley I will fear no evil for You are with me.”
  Psalm 53:4 “When I am afraid, I put my trust in God.”
You conquer fear by focusing on God’s promises, not the news on TV
• Underline what you think is the most important part and say why.

• Explain in your own words ‘the law of exposure’. What is that and WHY is it crucial in living as a Christian.

• Tell me who your friends are and your behavior and attitudes can ‘largely/mostly’ be predicted. Birds of the same feathers flock together has a lot of truth to it. And so you can largely divide Salinas into 3 groups with regard to fear of the virus. What are those groups?

• If you want to conquer fear (about anything), what sort of thing would you advise a person to do from what you have learned in this study?

• (Important. A thinking question) Do you think a person can actually be COMMITTED TO FEAR OF THE VIRUS? How would you know they are committed to being afraid and talking is useless?

• Why do you think anyone would WANT TO BE COMMITTED TO FEAR OF THE VIRUS and not give up that fear, even if God commands it? Why? Could part of the reason be they can’t help it! Over the years they have developed THE HABIT OF FEAR. If you look at the past 10 years it might be they have horribilized a lot about a lot things.... Could that be part of this?

7. In a few sentences what is the best thing you have learned from this study or from each other?

Pray

Memory: “The Lord is on my side; I will not be afraid.” (Psalm 118:6)
Well, the days drag on. Shelter at home continues as I write this. Help us Lord. Worries sabotage the days of many. If not this virus, worries about other things. Life is too short to spend it worrying. Or does it help?

1. Read several times Matthew 6:25-34. Sum up in one sentence what Jesus says.

2. Consider the following:
   
   Jesus commanded us in the Sermon on the Mount: “Do not worry.” (Matthew 6:24)

   Is that possible in this epidemic? Jesus is not Pollyanna. He is not blindly optimistic. He is not saying underestimate the danger of this virus. He is not saying be unconcerned like people on the Titanic were unconcerned after the ship hit an iceberg. They thought the Titanic was unsinkable. They were wrong. They should have taken it seriously and taken action to protect themselves.

   Likewise, we should do protective things like washing our hands and social distancing of at least 6 feet. We should not underestimate the coronavirus but neither should spend our days worried. What’s the difference?

   Well, concern is prudent behavior. But worry is a catastrophizing that chokes you. The Greek word for worry literally means to choke or to strangle. That’s what worry does to us. It strangles the joy out of our life. Worry stops us living.

   Now I know that some of you are pushing back. You are thinking “Jesus’ command not to worry is unrealistic….I can’t help but worry. I was born a worrier. I’ve worried all my life. That’s just who I am. I can’t help it.”

   Eleanor Roosevelt said, “Anyone who says ‘I can’t’…won’t”

   She meant that if we have the attitude of ‘I can’t’, then we are defeated before we begin. Think with me on this….why would Jesus command what is impossible to do. That would be cruel. If He commands us not to worry, it is hope

   His commandment not to worry is the good news it is possible!

   Worry is never mandatory. It is a choice.

   • What does the Bible say worry does to us? Is that really true? How is it true? Describe how it strangles?

   • What do you think of the Roosevelt quote? Think about this. People say it all the time. So what is her point?

   • (Personal and private, so be honest and take some time). About what in your life – behavior, attitude, dream – have you been saying “I can’t”? Honestly, what about yourself have you quit before you hardly tried?
3. Consider this:

That’s why Jesus teaches us to pray in the Lord’s Prayer “Our Father (Abba=daddy) who is in heaven” Jesus uses an Aramaic word “ABBA” for “father.” It literally means “daddy”.

Christianity is the only religion that teaches such a tenderness in God towards us. “Daddy”. God has the love and care for us of the best daddy on earth.

Teagan, my granddaughter is 6 but I remember when she was only 2, and her daddy would coax her to jump from the side of the pool into his arms.

I laugh when I remember this. Teagan would hesitate on the side of the pool. She was reluctant to jump. Why? Because she couldn’t swim and so she was afraid of the water.

But her daddy was in the water! Her daddy was there in the midst of what she feared! Her daddy would say, “Jump Teagan! I will catch you! Don’t be afraid. I will catch you.” And finally she would jump. Why? Her daddy was in the middle of the water she feared.

She focused on her daddy, not what she feared. That’s what we must do: Focus on God and not what we fear. It’s a choice no one can make for us.

Hebrew 13, verse 5 gives us 9 words that will give us peace in the coronavirus. It says “I will never let you down or leave you.”

He’s saying that He’s in the middle of what you fear. Don’t worry. He’s in the water.

I read a story about Death entering a town and walking down a street. A man asked Death what he was planning to do. Death said he would take the life of 10,000 people that day.

The next day the man was furious when he saw Death again walking on the sidewalk. He accused Death of lying to him. The man said, “You told me you would take the lives of 10,000 people but in fact 70,000 people died.” The man ranted that Death had not only lied but had been greedy.

Death replied: “Don’t blame me. I only took 10,000 lives. All the others killed themselves with worry.”

I have never known anyone who died of overworking but many who died of worry. The Mayo Clinic has said worry is the silent assassin.

It can damage your heart, even cause a stroke. It can clog your arteries and create blood clots. It weakens our immune system and the very time we need it in tiptop shape with the coronavirus, worry weakens it. The list is almost endless. It turns out that Jesus’ commandment not to worry is a health tip!

• Underline the most important sentence and say why.

How can worry be a silent assassin? Have you ever taken that seriously?

4. So Jesus COMMANDS us not to worry. But how can we stop it. Consider this:

First, tell yourself that worry does not change anything. It is a waste of time spent on the illusion that worry affects things.

No amount of worrying changes anything. It is a waste of today that will never come again. Worry does not take away tomorrow’s troubles. It takes away today’s happiness.

Some of us talk ourself into believing worry is a form of control in life, that if we worry enough we can actually control what happens.

But in our saner moments we know that we can worry about how our kids or grandkids will do in school, whether they will be druggies or not, will they marry well, will they get a good job when they grow up. And it’s all a waste of time.
That’s why Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount asked: “Will worry add one second to your life?” (Matthew 6:27)

Of course the answer is “No”. Worry is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but it gets you nowhere.

But people addicted to worrying pushback. They say “If you care, then you worry. Worry shows that you love someone.”

People assume that the opposite of worry is indifference. Apathy. If you don’t worry, they think you don’t care.

But that’s not true. The opposite of worry is not indifference. It’s peace and calmness. It’s being enjoyable to be around.

A worried-sick grandma is tense. She is incapable of being present with her grandchildren. You know what I mean about “being present.” It’s being able to listen. A worried grandma tends to be irritable and impatient because her mind is on her worries.

Like the Word of God says “Worry chokes our personality!”

Worry does not change tomorrow. It only ruins today. Today will never come again. Why waste it worrying?

So Jesus said in Matthew 6 verse 34: Don’t worry about tomorrow. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

“Don’t” – Jesus says it is a CHOICE. Jesus is saying worry is always an option, but choose not to take it.

- What is the most important part of the quote and say why you think so.

- Worry chokes our personality. Think about that. Describe how that can happen.

5. What else can we do to control virus fears. Well, this:

Secondly, don’t believe everything you hear.

I meet people who say “Well it must be true or it wouldn’t be in the newspaper. It must be true or it wouldn’t be said by respected newscasters.”

We need to remember that not everyone knows what they’re talking about.

I especially notice this at Christmas and Easter when I hear a newscaster claim certain things about Jesus that I know, because of my education and many trips to the Holy Land, I know to be factually wrong historically and in terms of archaeology.

And yet many people believe these newscasters without checking the facts. They think that a newscaster or writer in a newspaper would not say these things if they’re not true. But the fact is many have a bias against Christianity and they want to report things that undermine the birth of Jesus and His resurrection.

Many of them are actually atheists reporting on Christmas and Easter. They have a bias don’t you think? Don’t believe everything you hear.

There are what are called “fact checkers”. And when fact checkers do their work over and over again we find that what we’ve been told is “fake news”. It is factually wrong or even worse – it is made up news – because of bias.

There are in fact those who want to panic us about the coronavirus. For some there is a financial payoff. For others there is a political payoff to panic. Don’t believe everything you hear.

Proverbs 14 verse 15 warns us “Only a fool believes everything he is told.”

So before we believe something research the facts and think about political bias and possible payoff.
• Whether you agree or not, summarize what that quote says. What is the point?

• Now, say why you agree or disagree.

6. Now, after all this discussion and reading, what is your #1 piece of advice to people in this epidemic? Write it out. Don’t wing it.

7. Now total honesty. Would you share with us WHAT you are TEMPTED TO WORRY ABOUT personally. Everyone has to fight the temptation to worry. The devil wants to CHOKE our joy. So what are you tempted to worry about? You do not have to answer this if you would rather not, but it allows us to pray for you.

Pray

Pray for each other.
Coronavirus: Don’t Let It Depress You!
3rd in the series: Standing Up To The Coronavirus!
Genesis 37:18-32
Compass of Salinas/Marina - Life Group Discussions
May #3

   • Summarize in a few sentences the main action.

   • Read it several times slowly and then in a couple of sentences write what the Bible is saying to us. What is the application to life?

2. Please write out each of these verses. As you do that the meaning will sink into your heart.
   • Psalm 23:4

   • Isaiah 43:2

   • Think about what the Bible is saying…. You will get through this bad time. In fact, did you know that “through” is one of God’s favorite words! Isn’t that fantastic to know and hang onto!

3. Consider the following quotes from the message:
   Don’t blame God for Coronavirus. Come to Him because He will get you through this!
The life of Joseph is my proof. Life was good for him. He wore Armani suits - - an expensive Armani coat of many colors that his father had given him. And if there had been cars then, he would have been driving an Audi or a Cadillac.
   Then suddenly his life was turned upside down. His brothers ripped his Armani clothes off him and threw him into a deep pit. A dry cistern.
   Don’t blame God. Joseph’s troubles started with his big mouth and ego. He should have kept his dreams to himself because they caused his brothers to be envious and angry.
   One day he was wearing his Armani coat and the next day he ends up in a deep pit and is sold as a slave and is on his way to Egypt. And in Egypt the news gets worse and worse. His pit gets deeper.
   Remember, a jealous woman lies about him because he refused her sexual advances, and the husband, believing his wife, throws Joseph in a dungeon. It was a death sentence. No one came out of Pharaoh’s dungeon alive.
   But Joseph did not become depressed. Why? He knew God was with him in the dark dungeon. He knew God would help him get through this!
   Instead of dead, Joseph ends up second in command of Egypt as Pharaoh’s righthand man. That’s what God does. He helps people get through hard times.
   • Underline what you think is the most important sentence and say why. How does it help you make it ‘through’ hard times?
4. But to make it through hard times there are some things we must do. Consider the following:

   You’ve got to force yourself to get perspective.
   Day after day we are deluged with bad news. It is easier to be depressed than to get perspective. For Joseph in the dungeon it would have been so easy to slip into depression…but Joseph refused. He is an example that no one can do this for us. We must decide for ourselves not to give in to depression but fight for perspective; The Coronavirus is not baseball. There are no pinch hitters for us. We have to bat for ourselves. We have to decide to get perspective and not to be discouraged.
   
   Why? Because he got perspective. Remember that when his brothers threw him into the pit, they intended to kill him after lunch. They hated him. They ate lunch talking about killing him. He overheard this! He knew the plans.
   But along came a caravan of slave traders and they said to themselves, “Why not make some money off of Joseph. Let’s sell him, not kill him.”
   I promise you that in Egypt Joseph kept thinking “It could be worse, a lot worse. I could be dead.” Everyday above ground is a good day!
   That’s getting perspective. Dostoevsky, the Russian novelist, got it right when he said, “Most people don’t know how blessed they are until they almost die.”
   He said that when his execution by firing squad was cancelled at the last minute he got perspective. He became a lot more thankful for ordinary things in life.
   In fact, thinking about all the blessings we would miss if we were dead is not morbid. It is a useful thing to give us perspective in this epidemic.
   
   What would you miss besides your loved ones? BBQ’s with friends, sports… All these blessings we have if we are still breathing. Get perspective. Every day you wake up, be thankful. Not everyone make it through the night!
   Some people complain that roses have thorns. I’m thankful thorns have roses.

Perspective!
   • Underline the most important part in your opinion and say why. What difference does it make?

5. Here is a pretty surprising part of the sermon:

   “A cheerful heart is good medicine.” (Proverbs 17:22)
   At Stanford I had a friend who flunked out. He worked hard. In fact all he did was study. He was too serious and it crippled his creativity and his ability to learn. He needed to laugh more and loosen up.
   I have a book by William Nolan entitled A Surgeon’s Book of Hope. He discusses cases when the prognosis was very poor but his patients made amazing recoveries. And he says laughter made the difference. It actually helped them heal.
   Even the prestigious John Hopkins University Hospital - - said it has a policy of showing funny films to patients. Why? Because it can help heal the body.
   Dr. James Loder, a consultant for the US Olympic team, wrote a book called Mental Toughness. One of the chapters is The Power of Humor. This doctor says humor fights off negativity. It makes us mentally tough and optimistic and fights negativity. It improve performance!
   One of my conclusions from studying all those books is this: Laughter is a form of courage.
Laughter is a form of courage. Why? Because it makes you resilient. It helps you to hang in there. It helps you to make it through even the worst of times.

We are gonna make it through this.

- Think about it: Why might humor and laughing help us make it through things. My bet is that being GRIM does not empower us. It doesn’t help anyone through anything. Still, why do you think humor might help?

- On a scale of 1 to 10 are you a person with a lot of humor or do you tend to be on the grim side when you are going through a dark valley?

- Name 2 things you could do to lighten up your home and laugh more. (Confession: I’ve watched Caddy Shack at least 20 times)

6. Consider this quote:

*We can make it through this, if we see the invisible.*

Hebrews 11 verse 27 is a key verse to fight off depression and discouragement. It says “He endured because he saw Him who is invisible.”

- If we are depressed in this epidemic it is because there is a whole world we are not seeing - - the invisible world.
- We see this when Elisha’s servant is terrified because the Syrian army has surrounded their village and intends to kill the prophet. The servant is panicked.
- So what does Elisha do? He prays this: “Lord, open his eyes that he might see the invisible forces on our side.”

The servant had not seen the invisible world of God, and when his eyes saw it, he was no longer depressed or discouraged. We’ve got to see the invisible world in this Coronavirus epidemic.

Or take Stephen. He was stoned in Jerusalem for preaching Jesus rose from the dead and that Jesus is God. A mob thought he was a heretic and the stones flew at him. He fell to his knees. Blood gushed from his head. His blood stained the stones in the street crimson red.

And then suddenly Stephen looks up and shouts “I see heaven open.” He is seeing the invisible world. “I see heaven opened and Jesus on His throne. Jesus. Jesus. I come to you.”

And he slumped dead. But alive evermore in the invisible world. Heaven. Stephen - - stoned to death - - and yet he made it through to the unseen world of Jesus.

We can make it through this Coronavirus if we see the invisible world. The news on TV will never carry news about the invisible world.

You’ve got to go to the Bible for that news. To the Word of God. If our mental diet is only TV news, we will get discouraged and depressed.

The cure is like Elisha said – open your eyes to the invisible God who will bring us through this dark valley!!!

- On a scale of 1 to 10 how much do you think of the invisible world? According to the quote, how would it help you to think more about it?

- Our problem is we are so busy and most of us focus on the material world. It’s not easy to yank our head up and look up. Soooo, name 2 things you could do a little more of – and you cannot
answer ‘read my Bible’; that is a given -- to see a little more of the invisible world and the invisible Lord.

7. Please write out word for word these verses and after each say how that verse helps us get through hard times
   - Hebrews 12:2. (How does this help)
   - 2 Corinthians 4:18. (How does that help)
   - Hebrews 11:22. (How does that help?)

8. What was the best thing you learned in this study?

Pray for each other.

Memory verse: “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)
Is God To Blame For The Coronavirus?
4th in the series: Standing Up To The Coronavirus!
Compass of Salinas/Marina - Life Group Discussions
June #1

1. The title asks the questions on the mind of many people. God is blamed for many things in this world, isn’t He?
   Read Luke 13:1-5 slowly, even out loud, and several times for comprehension. Satan wants you to skim. Resist! In a couple of sentences sum up what you think Jesus is teaching about blaming God.

2. Consider the following quote about blaming God:
   I once was an atheist, and my argument against God was the same as Darwin’s – if God is good He would not allow suffering in this world.
   That was my logic until as a philosophy student at Stanford I realized that my thinking was flawed. Here is what I discovered. First, don’t equate the facts with the will of God.
   In our Scripture reading from Luke 13 Jesus refers to actual tragedies in Jerusalem that people were blaming on God.
   Pilate had massacred rebels in the Temple as they were sacrificing to God and the Tower at the Pool of Siloam had collapsed and killed 18 people. People blamed God.
   The logic was that God is in control of everything, so those tragedies must have been God’s will or He would not have allowed them to happen.
   Add to that logic that in the 1st century Jews believed bad things happened to people because God was punishing them for things they had done. Remember Job’s friends – they said his disease and losses were because God was punishing him for bad things he had done.
   Many people today still have that idea. Something bad happens and they ask, “What did I do to deserve this?” as if they are being punished. Jesus rejects that kind of thinking. Bad things are not God punishing us.
   Notice that in both cases Jesus asked: were these people worse sinners than the rest of Jerusalem? And both times Jesus says “No” they weren’t. In other words, God is not punishing them. Jesus says don’t blame God for these things. Pilate, not God, caused this suffering. Don’t blame God for what Pilate did.
   Don’t blame God for mistakes in construction or a contractor using cheap material to save costs to increase profits. And don’t blame God if people build on the San Andreas Fault and an earthquake kills people. Insurance call that an ‘act of God’. It isn’t. Don’t blame God for people building on the earthquake fault.
   • Please underline the most important sentence and explain why you agree or disagree.

3. Consider this quote
   Some of my favorite preachers say that the sovereignty of God means God is in control of all things that happen and therefore everything that happens is God’s plan. People say that is simply logic. And that is why you hear people say, “It’s all good.”
   I hear that a lot. Don’t you? It is actually a very callous, hard hearted thing to say and it is very very wrong.
   A woman having a miscarriage is not good. Try telling someone with cancer that it is ‘all good’.
In I John chapter 5 verse 19 God’s Word says plainly not to confuse facts with the acts of God. Scripture says “We know that…the whole world is under the control of the Evil One (Satan).”

When people say “God is in control” it sounds glorifying to God but actually it contradicts that verse doesn’t it?

That is why I shudder when I hear people say “God is in control.” Plainly 1 John 5 verse 19 says “No, Satan is in control”. This is Satan’s world….until Jesus comes at the end of time and completely defeats him. Let me give you some examples of this.

Remember Satan tempting Jesus? One of the temptations was for Jesus to worship Satan and then Satan would give Him the kingdoms of this world. This world was in fact in Satan’s control and it was his to give.

And remember the prayer Jesus taught us to pray. The Lord’s Prayer, and the key line is “Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Jesus is teaching that this world is not His kingdom. It’s Satan’s kingdom. In the Lord’s Prayer Jesus teaches that His will is not being done on earth as it is in heaven.

Not until the end of time when He comes again and eradicates all evil will the Lord’s Prayer be answered and come true.

That is the whole point of the Second coming of Jesus. Until Jesus comes again…don’t confuse the facts of life with the acts of God.

- Underline the most important sentence and say why. What application does it have for us?
- Pay special attention to the section about Satan is in control of this world according to 1 John 5:19. That messes with our mind and us saying God is in control. How do you put that verse together with God?
- Discuss this: Clearly Satan can use people as tools: Judas, Peter (Get behind me Satan, said Jesus), Hitler who was into Satan worship and Stalin. This is a Christian worldview: Satan is very slick and can get control of people as tools and use them to destroy and murder. Those are his names remember. The fact is Jesus will not be in control of earth until the 2nd Coming and He destroys evil and quarantines Satan in Hell forever. But….Roman 8:28 says God brings good out of evil. That is what sovereignty means. Not that everything that happens is an act of God – Satan is active and is the lord of this world temporarily – but God is so powerful and good He takes the twisted work of Satan and brings good. THAT does NOT mean what happened was good or that ‘everything is good’. It means that God can still bring good.

- What does Jesus teach us to pray in the Lord’s Prayer that clearly says God is not in control of everything on earth? Write the line out and discuss its implications.
- Discuss: does this mean prayer is useless? Not at all. Prayer produces ‘interventions’. Not always. Not until heaven will we understand why sometimes God intervened and other times not. All I know is that there are things that do not happen if I am too busy to pray. Prayer is part of how we PARTNER with Jesus in fighting evil and the devil. That is why prayer must be beyond our family to our country, our world, racism, etc. Satan is at work, but he fears our prayers. Do you pray very much against Satan, for our nation, our world?
4. Consider this. Read slowly because this has tight logic not to miss:

Let me give you an example from John chapter 11 that is simply devastating to the idea that everything that happens is God’s plan.

Remember Jesus’ good friend Lazarus died and was placed in a tomb. A couple of days later Jesus arrived and went to the tomb.

Verse 37 is the key verse. One Bible translation is “Jesus wept and groaned.” But that is too weak. The Greek word translated “groan” literally means “furious with anger”

Standing at the tomb Jesus is furious. He is enraged. Why? Why does He weep and shake with anger at the tomb? Because the death of Lazarus was not God’s will or plan. Notice - - Jesus is not furious at God the Father.

Jesus does not confuse the facts with the acts of God.

Let me take this a little deeper - - if the death of Lazarus was God’s will or plan, then for Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead violated God’s plan, and it was sin for Jesus to do so.

If everything that happens is God’s plan, then Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead was against the will of God.

This single event in Jesus’ biography destroys the common but false belief that God “Is in control of this world and everything that happens is His plan”.

It sounds so spiritual but it is SO wrong

“Don’t confuse the facts of life with the acts of God”.

• Summarize if a few sentences how Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is a BODY BLOW to the ideas that everything is good and everything that happens is God’s plan.

• What sentence in the quote would you like to discuss more, especially its application?

5. Consider this quote:

Second, don’t blame God for what people do.

Pilate slaughtered Jewish rebels in the Temple. Jesus said “Don’t blame God for what Pilate did.”

Someone might say, “Why didn’t God stop Pilate.”

But I ask how? The only way to stop Pilate, who killed hundreds of people, would be to supernaturally strike him dead. He had heard the preaching of Jesus and rejected it. The truth did not change Pilate. The only way to stop him was to kill him.

Think about it: If God struck people dead who had done wrong things and refused to change, imagine what shopping at Nob Hill would be like.

People would be falling dead in the aisles….and we would too….because well, none of us is perfect. We have all done wrong things. Lied, been greedy, gossiped, held grudges and punished people.

When we demand God stop people from doing bad things, what are we demanding. That He drop them dead? That He change them? What if they refuse to change? Then what? Freud did the same thing. He loved cigars. He said he couldn’t work without smoking his cigars. In fact he averaged 20 cigars a day. His doc warned him of the possible consequences but he kept smoking those cigars.
And when he developed cancer of the throat and mouth, he blamed God even though he was an atheist. Freud blamed God even though he didn’t believe the God he was blaming existed.

I would ask Freud: What is the God you don’t believe in supposed to do? Yank cigars out of your mouth?

People ask, why doesn’t God stop the virus?

People at Spring Break flocked to a Florida beach. They are crowded together. They think they are invincible. They ignore social distancing because they are invincible. And then they went home to parents and grandparents and infected them.

Maybe you read about Virginia teenagers deliberately coughing on produce in a grocery store. They thought it was funny.

Don’t blame God for what people do.

- Underline the most important sentence and say why and what its implication is for our life.

- What is the point of the Freud story? How does it contradict the idea that God is in control of everything that happens and everything that happens is according to God’s plan.

6. Now comes one of the most important truths in the Bible: Human freedom. Consider this carefully:

   **Human freedom is God’s great gift to us. It is why we are humans and not an animal who lives by instincts programed by nature into them.**

   Freedom is a package deal. It makes both good and evil possible, virtue is only possible because of freedom. But that same freedom also makes immorality a possible choice.

   Freedom makes possible telling the truth but also lying to your wife. It makes possible love or hate, forgiveness or revenge. Mother Teresa or Stalin.

   Don’t blame God for Stalin. Originally he studied to be a priest but greed and lust for power grabbed him and he made choices that turned him into Stalin, the mass murderer.

   God did not create Stalin. Lust for power and greed created Stalin. Every choice changes us into a more heavenly person or hellish.

   There is no such thing as a neutral choice. Every choice changes us one way or another.

   Should we blame God for drunk drivers? Should we expect God to immobilize the engine or turn their alcohol into water? Should God, every time a person gossips, supernaturally shut their mouth? There would be a lot silence on the phone in this city.

   Human freedom makes the best in life possible but also it makes possible for people to be part of the problem of evil and suffering in this world. Human freedom is a package deal.

   Don’t blame God for what people do.

- Underline what you think is the most important sentence and say why.

- What do I mean by ‘human freedom is a package deal’?

- Let that quote about freedom help you respond to someone who says that a chain smoker died of cancer because it was God’s will and God was in control, or a baby born deformed must have been God’s plan because God is control of everything that happens.

From what you have learned, what would you say in a paragraph. Take your time. **Be persuasive, not abrasive.** So what would you say that might lead to conversation rather than debate?
7. What is the most important idea in your opinion in this study?

Pray for each other.

Memory: “We know that…the whole world is under the control of the Evil One (Satan)”. 1 John 5:19