

THE SHACK

Small Group Discussion Guide

Week # 3 January 17 & 18 "The Great Sadness"
Pastor Bruce Humphrey

2 Samuel 18:28 - 19:4 ²⁸ Then Ahimaaz called out to the king, "All is well!" He bowed down before the king with his face to the ground and said, "Praise be to the LORD your God! He has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king." ²⁹ The king asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered, "I saw great confusion just as Joab was about to send the king's servant and me, your servant, but I don't know what it was." ³⁰ The king said, "Stand aside and wait here." So he stepped aside and stood there. ³¹ Then the Cushite arrived and said, "My lord the king, hear the good news! The LORD has delivered you today from all who rose up against you." ³² The king asked the Cushite, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The Cushite replied, "May the enemies of my lord the king and all who rise up to harm you be like that young man." ³³ The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you-- O Absalom, my son, my son!" ^{NIV} **2 Samuel 19:1** Joab was told, "The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom." ² And for the whole army the victory that day was turned into mourning, because on that day the troops heard it said, "The king is grieving for his son." ³ The men stole into the city that day as men steal in who are ashamed when they flee from battle. ⁴ The king covered his face and cried aloud, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Notes and Thoughts ...

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Facilitator Guide

Please read this guide before your group meets!

Remember to ***pray for your group*** before you meet that their hearts might be open to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

About the discussion guides: The questions are linked to the scriptures used in the weekend worship and steered by the content of the sermon and *The Shack*. **The goal is to dig deeper into the Scripture around the same theme.** Hopefully, the result will be deeper conversation around what the Bible is saying, and not necessarily what was read or preached. This also allows people to participate who have not heard the sermon or read that far in the book.

About participation: Now that the group has been meeting for three weeks, you might begin to notice some people talk more than others. One of the key roles of a facilitator is to give everyone in the group a chance to speak and share their thoughts and ideas. One way to deal with this is to intentionally allow silent time after the question is posed, to allow those who process internally, or might be more introverted, to think through what they want to say. Perhaps also, concentrate on selecting questions that might meet the comfort level of more people. There is *no need to rush* from question to question.

About prayer: As people work through *the great sadness*, it may be worthwhile to set aside prayer time in the group. Some helpful ideas for prayer:

- Write them down on a 3 x 5 card (or something like that) and have one person pray them at the end of the session.
- Write them down on a 3 x 5 card and have each person take one home to pray for through out the week.
- Assign one person to keep a prayer journal so the group can reflect on their journey together.
- Break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 to pray for each other.
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About you, the facilitator: Thank you for encouraging all who are in your group and continuing to draw more people into the discussion. Many will be blessed by your faithful leadership!

Remember that we are here for you if you need assistance logistically, materially, spiritually and prayerfully. Rochelle Castillo, Spiritual Growth, (858) 487-0811, ext. 213

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START IT:

- [New groups] Do you have any bad habits?
- Share a time you leaned on someone else to get through a difficult experience?
- Do you tend to dwell on the past or blaze into the future?

STUDY IT:

- Read the Scripture passage aloud. (**2 Samuel 18:28 - 19:4**) Then read the passage below from THE SHACK.

"It is so easy to get sucked into the if-only game, and playing it is a short and slippery slide into despair. *If only* he had decided not to take the kids on that trip; *if only* he had said no when they asked to use the canoe; *if only* he had left the day before, *if only, if only, if only.* And then to have it all end in nothing."

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- Why is the *if only* game so destructive? How did it affect King David in 2 Samuel 18?
- If you were an advisor to King David, how would you encourage him to deal with his situation? (See 2 Samuel 19 to read the response of one of King David's generals.)
- How is one's suffering because of sin different from one being punished by God because of sin? Was Absalom being punished for his own sin? Was Absalom's death God's act of punishment for David's sin?
- Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Romans 8:28. How might these Scriptures be helpful in times of crisis or grief?
- For further study, read 2 Samuel 12:11-23 and consider how David responds differently to this tragedy. The story of Absalom has roots back to 2 Samuel 13. For further study, read 2 Samuel 13 through 2 Samuel 19. Trace the long path of poor choices and sinful decisions that ultimately led to Absalom's death.

LIVE IT:

- Not all of us have experienced the deep grief of losing a child or spouse, but most still play the *if only* game on some level. How do you get caught in this game in the small things of life?
- How have you moved through a time of grief in a healthy way? Or are you currently in a season of grieving?
- There are dangers in both dwelling on things of the past and blazing through life without feeling. What accountability, or checks and balances, do you have to help you discern a good balance between those two extremes?

PRAY IT: (this part will be done by our Prayer Ministry team for this series)