



The Bad Boys of Easter: Part 3: 12 Feet of Separation

INTRODUCTION

When dreams don't come true, we turn our frustrations toward God. When things don't work out, nothing goes our way, and everyone else seems to have lives we can only dream of, we turn our frustrations toward God . . . or we stop believing. If you were taught to believe in a personal God who is all-knowing and all-powerful, how can you not turn our frustration on him when life gets difficult?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What part of Sunday's message stood out to you? Was there anything you disagreed with or that encouraged you?

*"God is not what you have experienced.
Disappointment with life easily becomes disappointment with God."*

- Why do you think we're tempted to assume God should make our lives easy? What are some ways that assumption influences the way we view God?
- Have you ever known someone who maintained a strong faith in God despite their difficult circumstances? If so, how did that person's faith influence your relationship with God?

Read: Luke 23:32-46

Context: Luke was an eyewitness to the life of Jesus. He took the time to write down the details of Jesus' life so that we would know who Jesus was and what he did while he was here on earth. Luke was an eyewitness to this account.

- What are the two words in verse 34 that were so unusual for someone who would be dying on a cross? Why?
- Who was Jesus praying to His Father for in that moment of crucifixion? Why is that so unnatural even for us? What does that say about the heart of Jesus, in the middle of a moment, when God seems to be no where in the picture?
- What does the thief next to Jesus realize about Jesus in the moment of crucifixion? (vs. 42)
- What is the confession of faith this thief makes that Jesus recognizes and gives him assurance of eternal salvation? (vs. 43)
- Andy said that Jesus' last message before he died was, "My thoughts about you and love for you are not reflected in what's happened to you. I love you. I am not what you have experienced." Why is this so significant for us as we face trials in this life?
- What is the significance of the temple curtain tearing from top to bottom in verse 45?
- During the message, Andy said, "God used the injustice experienced by Jesus to bring salvation to mankind. If you choose to trust him, God can bring good from what life has thrown at you as well." Is it difficult for you to believe that? Why or why not?
- God is not what you have experienced. God can be trusted in spite of your experience. Have you confused life with God? Have you drawn conclusions about God based on your experiences?
- Are there circumstances in your life right now that you need to surrender to God? If so, what is one thing you can do this week to begin to open your hands to your heavenly Father? How can this group support you?

MOVING FORWARD

Life happens. God can be trusted. As long as your fists are clenched, you can't receive from him what you need most. God will not force on you what you aren't willing to receive. When you open your hands in surrender, instead of clenching your fists in anger, you are a candidate for his life-giving, life-defining grace. When you throw up your hands in surrender, you may discover answers to the questions that have controlled you for years.

LIVE IT OUT

Memorize: Learn Luke 23:41-43

Journaling: Take some time to journal about what God may be trying to do in your life and in other's lives through the hard times. Write about the good in the midst of the trial.

Prayer: Pray that God would help you release your tension or anger and open your hands in surrender to God.

Accountability: Tell someone about the struggle you are having with your relationship with God. Be transparent. Invite them to come alongside of you as you walk.