



TANDAZA MINISTRIES

*Isolation
isn't
Stagnation*

Tandaza Group Material
Season 3

STUDY 1

COPING IN ISOLATION

Matthew 26:31 “I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”

The idea of isolation or solitude is not one that has natural appeal. Being cooped upon your own or with a small group of people may be fun for a short time.

Experiencing it over an extended period of time is a different matter. Add to it limitations on movement and it no longer sounds attractive.

2020 has been a year where most of the world’s population has experienced some form of limitations in either “gathering” or “moving”. The COVID – 19 pandemic has been a life changer for many communities and may forever have altered our daily routine.

In the Bible we find a number of examples of people who were in situations of isolation. Jeremiah spent time in a well for “unpopular” prophecies, Joseph was sold off to a foreign country by brothers who were jealous of him, David found himself in Philistia seeking refuge away from Saul, Daniel spent a night with lions as punishment for praying to God.

Share: How has your life changed in the past few months as a result of the ongoing pandemic?

Reading: Matthew 26: 31 – 36; 47 – 56

1. Based on Peter’s response and that of the other disciples (v. 35) would you say they expected to desert Jesus?
2. Do you think that Jesus foreknowledge (that the disciples would fall away) made it easier for him to cope?
3. What are the reasons that people find themselves abandoned/isolated?
4. Are there situations where you have found yourself alone and “locked in?” How do you feel when in these situations?
5. If you knew that you would be abandoned or isolated what measures would you take?
6. Is turning to Jesus the first thing we think of when faced with abandonment or isolation?

Lesson: The experience of being abandoned or isolated is something that all of us will likely go through in life. It is reassuring for a Christian that he/she never is really alone even when seemingly abandoned or isolated. Indeed it is quite possible that it is in those times (in the absence of others) that we have the chance to experience the true presence of God. Moreover, the fact that our Lord experienced abandonment means that he can identify and empathize with us.

2 Kings 6:17: ‘And Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the

Lord opened the servant’s eyes and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.’

STUDY 2

GROWING IN ISOLATION

1 Samuel 2:26 “And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men.”

One of the hardest experiences for any child is separation from his/her parents. A toddler senses when a parent is leaving for work and if granted the opportunity to choose will have none of it. The first day of kindergarten (sometimes the entire first month) is weepy as young children are dropped off at school. For those who join boarding school at an early age, it is not easy and they have to “toughen up” so as to cope with the absence of parental presence.

The story of Samuel reminds us that the experience of being “left behind” is not new. The Bible records that

Samuel was given to the Lord as soon as he was weaned. Even with an extended weaning period it is unlikely that he was a day older than four years when he joined “boarding school/temple” for the rest of his childhood. His mother would visit him once a year (and leave a little robe) but he was basically on his own.

Or was he?

Share: What childhood experience of separation from your parent (s) or guardian (s) do you remember?

What emotions did you go through when experiencing the separation?

Reading: 1 Samuel 3:1 – 21

1. In Verse 1 it is recorded that Samuel ministered under Eli. What is the significance of this?
2. When Samuel heard his name being called why did he think it was Eli calling him?
3. The LORD entrusted a prophecy of destruction (over the family of Eli) to Samuel. Why would he do this yet Samuel was still a boy? Why do you think the judgment so harsh?
4. The next morning Eli made Samuel tell him what the LORD had said. What does this tell you of Eli’s relationship with the Lord? What does his response to the prophecy tell you about his character? Verses 19 – 21 narrate Samuel’s growth from a boy ministering in the temple to a prophet of the Lord. What made this transformation possible?
5. The story of Samuel reminds us of others in the Bible who were separated from their families.

Joseph (taken captive to Egypt) and Jesus (left in the temple) are two such examples. What lessons can we pick from these individuals in terms of making the most of tough circumstances (including being “all alone”)?

Lesson: Being away from community evokes feelings of being abandoned. It is hard to believe that

separation will result in anything good. Yet time and time again we see individuals coming out from “God enforced” separation (jail, confinement, seclusion and even treatment as an outcast) refined, more determined and even better equipped for the Lord’s work.

Romans 8: 35 – 37: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

STUDY 3

RIGHT - FOCUSING IN ISOLATION

Genesis 45:9 “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.”

There is a phrase often used in leadership circles – “it is lonely at the top.” Of course this is not desirable nor is it inevitable. All men and women gain from being part of a community as opposed to being alone. But even with a commitment to being part of a community, there are times (or extended periods of time) when we will find ourselves having to face a challenge on our own. These are times when our moral compass is tested and our consistency is tried. Are we able to stand before, through and after the storm?

Joseph’s story stands out in the book of Genesis as being one who was alone in a foreign land. No family.

No benefactors. No childhood friends. He arrived as a slave (having previously been a favoured son) and went through “career growth” in Potiphar’s house, imprisonment, “career growth” in prison and finally elevation to Pharaoh’s most senior civil servant. It is only after this promotion that he was reconciled with family.

Share: At what point in your life have you felt tempted to compromise or give in to despair? Please share an experience.

Reading: Genesis 45: 3 - 12

1. Why do you think Joseph’s brothers did not respond when he revealed himself to them?
2. There is a phrase commonly used “forgive and forget”. Is this really the case when you read verse 4 – 5?
3. What kind of thought/emotions do you think Joseph experienced when on his way to Egypt? Whilst in Potiphar’s house? In prison? When he was promoted?
4. Joseph uses the phrase “God sent me” in verse 5, 7 & 9. What do you think is the significance of

this?

5. In verses 8 – 10 it is clear that Joseph is not just interested in reconciliation but also in the well being of his family who had hurt him. Why would he do this?
6. There are aspects of Joseph's story that bear remarkable parallels to the story of Christ's life and particularly his crucifixion. Joseph was separated from his father (sold as a slave). He bore consequences for mistakes that he had not made (accusation by Potiphar's wife). There were times he could have said he had been forsaken (in prison). And yet was finally crowned in glory and shared this with people who did not deserve it (his brothers). What do we learn from Joseph's example?

Lesson: In a world where “blocking”, “un - friending” and “freezing out” are not uncommon, it can seem like folly to let go of pain that has been caused or disloyalty you have experienced. Sometimes, the focus of our anger is God himself. This is more so the case when you have paid a high price. Remember when walking that lonely path of unfairness/pain/despair/hurt, it is not accidental. God knows. God cares.

Philippians 2:12 - 13: Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.

STUDY 4

PRODUCTIVE IN ISOLATION

Paul was imprisoned for two years in Rome under house arrest. Acts 28:16-30

Despite the limitation on his freedom, Paul sized the opportunity and used it to write several instructional letters that give an insight into both his pastoral care of the churches and his attention to a matter at the individual level. To churches of Ephesus, Colossae and Philippi as well as a personal letter to his friend Philemon.

These are the letters that he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.

It is also mentioned that he shared the gospel to the soldiers on who he had been chained to. Therefore his ministry continued even when his freedom had been hampered. With all the limitations on his freedom, Paul was intent on finding ways to continue the work of proclaiming the good news about God's coming kingdom

1. While Paul was in isolation He was still effective, he was not silenced by the circumstances surrounding him. Instead he devised a strategy to continue with his service.

- What strategies have you devised that have helped you to remain relevant during this period?
- What new skill have you learned this season?

2. Do you think Paul's letters had any effect? Please explain.

3. While in I solation many people in our families, friends and congregation had gone through a rough patch, through job loss, loss of a dear one, physical and emotional instability. Have you been able to reach out and by what means?

4. What is your greatest need at this time? Has anyone reached out to you and in what way?



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