

CBCC CONFERENCE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Lilias Trotter (1853-1928)

"I am seeing more and more that we begin to learn what it is to walk by faith when we learn to spread out all that is against us: all our physical weakness, loss of mental power, spiritual inability – all that is against us inwardly and outwardly – as sails to the wind and expect them to be vehicles for the power of Christ to rest upon us. It is so simple and self-evident – but so long in the learning!"

Question:

If we view this as reflective of biblical thinking regarding suffering, how can we help ourselves (or others) move towards this view?

Case Study:

The Pratt Family are in a crisis. Gary and Melanie have been married for 14 years and have two kids – Andrea (12) and Jeremy (10). They attend your church, have served in children's ministries, and are part of a small group gathering. Outwardly, they seemed to have it all together, but in the privacy of their home they have known their marriage was unraveling. However it wasn't until two weeks ago that Melanie found out that Gary has been having an affair with a woman he met online. Once he was confronted, he admitted to the affair but said he doesn't want to lose his family. The betrayal Melanie is feeling is fueling an anger she didn't know she was capable of. She wants Gary out of the house now.

Gary and Melanie have reached out to the pastor for help and he is asking you to coordinate ministry to this family.

Case Study Questions:

Theological Questions: How does the biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption speak into this struggle? What do each of the Pratts need in order to be helped to move toward God at this time? What hope can you offer the Pratts?

Church Resource Questions: Who in this family will you help? In what ways will you want to help? Who will you enlist to join you in helping?

Personal Questions: Do you like these people? Why does this matter? What are the temptations that you may face as you love them?

Conceptual Questions: What more do you want to know about the Pratt family? What's the heart for each of them? How are (or might) each of them responding to the heart? What might be their heart issues? What themes would you look for in each of their lives?

Methodological Questions: How will you move toward these people (love, know, speak, do)? How do you (and others) go about building relationships with the individuals in this family? Do you engage these people with your own story?

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CASE STUDY CONVERSATION GOALS MARCH 2018

Theological Questions: How does the biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption speak into this struggle? What do each of the Pratt's need in order to be helped to move toward God at this time? What hope can you offer the Pratt's?

- Think about hope in the presence, purposes, and person of God
- Gospel hope means that God knows the depth of our sin and knows we are impotent to change it – it means that full provision has been made for us to live a Spirit-led, Christ-imitating life
- God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (Psalm 145:8)
- He is Saviour, defender and deliverer for those who cry out to Him (Is 19:20)
- He is the Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6)
- His truth revives the soul, gives wisdom to the simple, joy and enlightenment – we can ask and search with confidence (Psalm 19)
- Jesus is a High Priest who has suffered because of sin and struggled against sin – we can approach the throne boldly in our time of need (Hebrews 4)

Church Resource Questions: Who in this family will you help?

- Everyone in this family has needs but, in wisdom, we won't presume to know what they are – we need to know what the kids are aware of and proceed in serving them with the parents input and participation.

In what ways will you want to help?

- Along with conversations that will help each of them move toward God, you'll want to make sure there is adequate support to give Gary and Melanie the time needed to focus on their relationship with God and each other. They may need to be alleviated of responsibilities in church programming to allow for this time.

Who will you enlist to join you in helping?

- People the Pratts already have trusted relationships with if possible – small group leaders, mature couple, pastor or elder, maybe a biblical counselor?
- Maybe people who serve the children in programs
- Large enough circle to avoid gaps but small enough to keep it relationally deep and cohesive

Personal Questions: Do you like these people? Why does this matter?

- 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Romans 12:9a

What are the temptations that you may face as you love them?

- Judgment
- Sympathy rather than empathy
- Losing sight of God's character and nature: sovereign, loving, good
- Hopelessness

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Conceptual Questions: What more do you want to know about the Pratt family?

- Gary – When did the internet searching begin? Would he identify that as the beginning of the problem or does it go further back? What has been the nature of his struggle? Child porn (should he be removed from children’s ministry)? What drives his choices? What is he longing for? What has he done to try to change it? How is he functioning in his roles as husband and dad?
- Melanie – Where is she turning for comfort? What is her hope? Besides anger, what is she feeling toward God? Toward Gary? How is she functioning in her role as wife and mom?

What’s the heart for each of them? (these are possibilities but we won’t know until we understand how they are struggling)

- Gary – lust of the eyes, longing for pleasure, deceitfulness, selfishness
- Melanie – betrayal of trust, infidelity, deceit
- Andrea – insecurity, hostile home life
- Jeremy – insecurity, hostile home life

How are (or might) each of them responding to the heat? What might be their heart issues?

- Gary – grasping to regain what he is losing – wanting to maintain the status quo, selfishness, apathy, lust
- Melanie – hardening her heart against further hurt, unforgiveness, anger at God and/or Gary, confusion, doubt
- Andrea – fear, anger (depending on how it is unfolding in the home, they maybe unaware of exactly what is going on, or even that anything is out of the ordinary)
- Jeremy – fear, anger

What themes would you look for in each of their lives?

- What indication is there that their hearts are turning toward God?
- Idols
- Earnestness to change? Teachable? Repentant?
- Despair?

Methodological Questions: How will you move toward these people (love, know, speak, do)? How do you (and others) go about building relationships with the individuals in this family?

- Formal conversations
- Spend time with them – establish mentor relationships with people who can model godly family roles
- Invite them to share with their small group so they can move toward them as well
- Humbly – “I stumble in sin too”

Do you engage these people with your own story?

- Love/know first – maybe, but don’t rush past knowing theirs

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