

BIG IDEA

Jesus came to show us how much we are loved.

SCRIPTURE

Malachi 1:1-2, Malachi 3:1-4, Mark 1:2b-4, John 1:29-31, Romans 5:6-8,

ICEBREAKER AND OPENING THOUGHT

These opening questions set up a relationship between disappointment and love. You may want to be the first to share a specific disappointment in life. Depending on the group, you may want to ease into this topic since it has the potential to get deep very quickly. For others, you might jump right into the deep end. You know your group and where you can go with this first couple of questions. The Christmas holiday is a hard season for many people who are missing loved ones, and it's OK for people to express how they're feeling.

BIBLE DISCUSSION

Some people in the group may need permission to voice disappointment with God. In some religious traditions and upbringings, negative feelings directed toward God might have been unacceptable, and this may be a challenging question for some. It is OK to have disappointment with God, and for that disappointment to cause you to question God's love or even his existence. The Scriptures are full of people wrestling with those feelings and questions.

We don't get an answer to the "Why" questions around hurt, disappointment, and suffering in the Bible; instead, we see how God has entered into our suffering in the person of Jesus. There is no answer to the "Why" question because there is no answer we can accept. We do get an answer to another question – the "What" question. "What has God done about our pain?" He came to us to show his love, and by doing so, he suffered pain, disappointment, and crushing defeat, and he has defeated it, and all who say yes to him begin to experience that some overcoming love.

LIFE APPLICATION

That God became a man in Jesus (the incarnation) is one of the essential realities the Christian faith testifies to in this Christmas season. For that testimony puts a megaphone to God's first evaluation of creation in Genesis 1 when "God saw it was good." The incarnation is God's declaration, so all can hear and know the great love of God revealed to us in Jesus. Jesus says in John's Gospel, "God's care for humanity was so great that he sent his unique Son among us, so that those who count on him might not lead a futile and failing existence, but have the undying life of God Himself (John 3:16 translation by Dallas Willard)." The incarnation is God's divine "Yes!" to all of his creation. God became one of us to redeem us and to take all that is good and make it glorious. May we continue to direct our hearts and actions toward him so that our lives might announce his love to all.