CoreGroup Guide | Debunked - Part 3
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Welcome

Christian Cliche Red Flag: When people only use the phrase in no good very bad situations.

This week's saying, *Everything Happens for a Reason*, is a perfect example of the sort of thing we say when we don't know what else to say. It sounds true-enough and comforting-enough, even if we haven't the faintest idea what the reason for the struggle may be.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for bringing us together and meeting us where we are. Sometimes life is hard, and we want answers that aren't easy to find. In our grief and uncertainty, remind us that you are near, even when we struggle to feel your presence. Give us courage to bring our questions to you and patience when the answers don't come. Open our hearts to what we might learn today, and teach us to listen with compassion. Amen.

Ice Breaker

When you're having a difficult day, what's your go-to for comfort: a food, a person, an activity, or something else?

The Head

Romans 8 is considered one of the most significant chapters of the Bible for the way that it clearly and succinctly lays out the gospel message. It contains some famous phrases like, "If God is for us, who is against us?" (verse 31) and "nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus" (verse 38), but its answer to the question of whether everything happens for a reason is a bit more nuanced than we may have been led to believe.

> **Romans 8:26-29**
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> ***26*** *In the same way, the Spirit comes to help our weakness. We don't know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans.* ***27*** *The one who searches hearts knows how the Spirit thinks, because he pleads for the saints, consistent with God's will.* ***28*** *We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.* ***29*** *We know this because God knew them in advance, and he decided in advance that they would be conformed to the image of his Son. That way his Son would be the first of many brothers and sisters.*

- What do you notice about the role the Spirit plays in our struggles?
- What do you think it means to be "conformed to the image of his (God's) Son," Jesus?
- What do you think it looks like for God to "work all things together for good"?

The Heart

When something difficult happens, it is natural to look for answers that can help us make sense of the situation. If we can name why something happened we can move forward, and maybe avoid having it happen again. Unfortunately, some things that happen to us just happen. It may feel destabilizing and scary to admit that we don't know why certain things happen, but letting go of our answers can open the door for us to experience God in a new way.

- The explanation that "everything happens for a reason" is popular for a reason.
    - What parts, if any, of this phrase are helpful?
    - What parts, if any, can be harmful?
- How does it change your view of God to shift from thinking God puts us through trials intentionally to understanding that God can redeem our struggles?
- Share a time when God redeemed a struggle you have gone through and something good that came from it.

The Hands

When someone is hurting, we often try to offer an explanation to bring comfort. But we don't always know why something difficult happens, and we may never have an answer. In Romans, we meet a God who helps us even when we cannot find the words to pray. We can be helpful to others by listening and making room for their questions and grief. We don't have to explain someone's pain to remind them they are loved and they don't have to go through it alone.

- Think of a time someone supported you through something difficult. What did they say or do that was helpful?
- Who in your life is going through something hard right now? What is one specific way you could show up for them this week without trying to explain or fix their situation?
- "Everything Happens for a Reason" is a common phrase, but as a group, how might you reframe, rephrase, or rewrite this statement in a way that is more Biblically accurate?

Closing Prayer

A Prayer from Romans 8:26-29 (The Message)

God, we are tired of waiting, but your spirit is right alongside us. We don't know how or what to pray, but it doesn't matter. You do our praying, in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. You know us far better than we know ourselves, you keep us present before you. That is why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives can be worked into something good. You knew what you were doing from the beginning, God, as you shaped the lives of those who love you to be like Jesus. It's in his name we pray, Amen.