

— IN THE — MEANTIME

PART 1: The New Normal

INTRODUCTION

What do we do when our circumstances are so challenging there's no way forward and no way out? We have problems for which there seem to be no solutions. We have questions without answers. During times like these, we're tempted to run or give up. We're tempted to give in to jealousy, resentment, and anger . . . especially anger toward God. That's because when life gets hard, it feels like God is absent, apathetic, or angry. But what if he isn't? Is it possible to hang on to joy, hope, and patience in the meantime?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Talk about a season of life—childhood, teen years, college, early adulthood—that you look back on fondly. What did you enjoy about that season?
2. Have you ever seen someone demonstrate great faith in God despite difficult circumstances? If so, how did that person's faith influence your own?
3. When have you faced a difficult event or season in life that caused you to feel you'd never be happy again or that no good could come from what you were experiencing? What happened?
4. During the message, Andy asserted that God loves you regardless of whether it feels like he loves you. How would your life be different if you lived as though you fully believed that truth?
5. Talk about a time when you felt God was absent from your life, apathetic about what you were going through, or angry with you. How did it influence your relationship with him? What did you do?
6. If you're currently in the middle of difficult circumstances or when you are in the future, what are some practical things you can do to remind yourself that God hasn't abandoned you? What role can a Community Group play in shoring up your faith when God is silent?

MOVING FORWARD

Sometimes God is silent just because he's silent. Just because he's silent doesn't mean he's absent, unconcerned, or angry. You may need to know that someday. You may need to know it *today*. During challenging times, it's easy to assume that you'll never be happy again, no good can come from your circumstances, or there's no use continuing. Hold on to joy, hope, and purpose by holding on to the truth that God still has the whole word—*your* world—in his hands.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

"Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

Matthew 11:6