

# IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: DISCOVERING GRATITUDE AND JOY

## WEEK 2 – LOOKING IN: FINDING OUR WORTH

### OPENING DISCUSSION

In the movie, “It’s a Wonderful Life,” George Bailey comes face to face with the fact that instead of living a life of adventure and making a name for himself by designing the world’s largest buildings and bridges, he is stuck in the same dull work, day after day. On top of this, a financial crisis occurs that leads him to wonder whether everyone would be better off without him, or better yet, if he had never been born. An angel sent to help George decides to grant his wish, and shows him exactly what the world would have been like without him in it.

If you had the opportunity to see what the world would be like had you never been born, would you? If so, why?

### OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, in whom we live and move and have our being; before we were born, you knew us. You created us for yourself so that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. Your love for us is so overwhelming at times, and yet, we confess that our love for you competes with our love of earthly things. We have given our time and money and energy to people, places and things that we think can buy our happiness and security and boost our status and wealth. Help us to refocus our priorities and thoughts so that they align with the priorities of heaven, and to find our true value in being your beloved. Amen.

### BIBLE STUDY

**Job 3:1-3, 11-12, 20-23, 25-26**

Afterward, Job spoke up and cursed the day he was born.

<sup>2</sup> Job said: <sup>3</sup> Perish the day I was born, the night someone said, “A boy has been conceived.”

<sup>11</sup> Why didn’t I die at birth, come forth from the womb and die? <sup>12</sup> Why did knees receive me and breasts let me nurse? <sup>13</sup> For now I would be lying down quietly; I’d sleep; rest would be mine.

<sup>20</sup> Why is light given to the hard worker, life to those bitter of soul, <sup>21</sup> those waiting in vain for death, who search for it more than for treasure, <sup>22</sup> who rejoice excitedly, who are thrilled when they find a grave? <sup>23</sup> Why is light given to the person whose way is hidden, whom God has fenced in?

<sup>25</sup> Because I was afraid of something awful, and it arrived; what I dreaded came to me. <sup>26</sup> I had no ease, quiet, or rest, and trembling came.

The Old Testament book of Job is one of the wisdom poetry writings collected in the Bible. It was a form of Ancient Near Eastern storytelling that aided in the quest for knowledge about the nature of God and the universe, and the place of humans in it.

The story begins in a “once upon a time” construction: “Once there was a man from Uz by the name of Job.” (Job 1:1) Job was the archetype for the “perfect” human, and the story itself is seeking to answer the question

of why there is suffering in the world. In the beginning of the story, God allows the The Adversary to test Job's faith by taking away Job's health, wealth and family.

Following a seven-day period of silence, and because of the degree of his suffering, Job comes very close to cursing God but never does. Instead he curses his existence. Because of his immense loss, Job wishes he had never been born, or that he would have simply died in the womb or at birth, or even that he could undo the creation of light and revert back to the darkness before the creation of the world.

1. How are Job and George Bailey alike?
2. Why is unexplained trouble so hard for us to bear?
3. Job's story, like George's, doesn't end in crisis. Read Job 42:12-17. In the end, Job was restored twofold what he had lost as a result of his quest for wisdom. If given the opportunity to question God like Job did, what questions do you think George might have asked God about the state of his life thus far, during his moment of crisis?
4. In the midst of tragedy or crisis, what questions might we ask God?

## MOVIE DISCUSSION

### Every Life is a Gift

- When the angel Clarence responds to George's wish to never have been born, what nightmarish world does George discover? What impact did George's absence even beyond that of Bedford Falls?
- How does this dramatic episode that George experiences speak to the choices we make each day in our own lives?
- Over 200 years ago, Edmund Burke wrote to Thomas Mercer, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." How is this statement true when you consider the dark alternate reality of Pottersville?
- What are some examples of "Pottersville" that exist today because of the absence of good people to speak and act on behalf of others?
- What did the vision of Pottersville show George about the time, talents and treasures he was given?
- What do you think God may be calling us to do with our existence today to prevent other "Pottersville" scenarios? How might that require us to use our time, talents and treasures?
- When George races home, what little things does he appreciate that he had thoughtlessly ignored before?
- How does learning to appreciate the small things in life help us appreciate and value our lives as a whole? What are some of those small things in life that you have learned to value over the years? When we neglect to enjoy these little things, what are we left with in life?

## **WRAPPING UP**

Reflect on Harry's description of his brother George Bailey as the "richest man in town."

As an exercise this week, make time to write down the people and things for which you are grateful. Refer to the list often and when you do, give thanks to God for your rich blessings.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

**Gracious God, looking inward, we recognize our own hesitation to see and believe what we can accomplish together. Give us the courage to bring the vision of your hospitality and justice to life now and for the future. May these earthly treasures we offer become the path to treasures of well-being for those who will be touched by it. In the name of the one who called all to the true treasure of life with God, Jesus the Christ. Amen.**