

The Gospel of Mark

Home Group Discussion Guide

How to Avoid Backsliding — Part 2 of 3

Mark 4:1-20

ICEBREAKER: When do you feel out of control?

OVERVIEW: To backslide is to lapse morally or spiritually; to revert to a worse condition. Countless people drop out of church every year. What's worse, the majority of kids who grow up in church become spiritually disengaged after high school. This is nothing new. Jesus knew this would be a big problem for Christians in every generation, and He gave us some valuable instruction in *The Parable of the Farmer Scattering Seed*. To avoid backsliding, we must be receptive to God's word, ready for adversity, and resolved to keep Jesus at the center of our lives. In this study we will go deeper with the 6 Biblical insights about adversity so that we can be better prepared for problems and persecution.

1. Read Mark 4:3-9, 14-17. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain. (Or what was your key takeaway from Sunday's message?)
2. Have you ever backslidden because of adversity, or have you seen this happen to someone else? Explain.
3. Why do you think adversity often leads to backsliding?
4. The first insight about adversity is that God doesn't promise us health, wealth and prosperity in this life, but in the life to come. Has this insight helped you handle adversity in the past, or would it have helped you if you would have known it? Explain.
5. What is the Prosperity Gospel, and what Biblical evidence can you use refute it?

6. The second insight is that God is sovereign and loves you deeply. How has this truth helped you handle the storms in your life? (BONUS: If God is sovereign, does this mean that He causes all things, Or that He is in charge of all things?)
7. The third insight is that God promises to give you what you need to serve His purpose for your life. How is this different than simply saying, "God will give you whatever you need?" How can this truth help you to persevere through problems in the future?
8. The fourth insight is that God allows problems in your life to grow you. How does knowing this help when you go through trials? How has God used adversity to grow you?
9. The fifth insight is that the right response to problems is endurance — remain faithful under pressure. What would this look like for you in the midst of a real-life problem? What do you need to do to get better at responding to adversity?
10. The sixth insight is that no matter what you are going through, remember that it is only temporary, and that we have heaven to look forward to. How can this truth give you strength for the daily battles you have to face?
11. Is there a problem or trial that you are facing in your lie right now? Explain. If so, how can our group pray for you and support you?

The Last Word: Adversity will either destroy you, define you, or develop you. The key is how you respond.