

# **THE PRIZE: Under Pressure**

## **Session 6 – God’s Plan when You are Under Pressure**

### **Leader’s Guide**

**Featuring Brad Guzan, Kaká and Paul**

**DVD – 14:32 to 22:05**

#### **WARM-UP**

“If you put your trust in God, life will get easier; and if you are obedient, success is guaranteed.”  
What is your reaction to this statement?

#### **TEAM HUDDLE**

In this section of the DVD both players speak about disappointments, frustrations, setbacks and defeat they have faced as professionals. In life, all people face unexpected trials and even tragedy whether they are Christ-followers or not (Matthew 5:45). When these things happen, people often ask, “Why is God allowing this trial?” However, there is another question that all followers of Jesus would be wise to consider, and that is, “What is God doing through this trial?” This is the question we will focus on in this section.

Both players speak of times when they have experienced disappointments and defeat. When bad things happen in life, people often question either the existence of God or where He is in the situation. Why do you think this might be?

(Supplementary question if you think this would help your discussion) Are there any events in your life that have caused you pain and sadness? How did you relate to God in this situation? Did you reach out to Him or did you want to run from Him?

How did the two players say they dealt with difficulties in their professional lives?

Guzan showed he understands that God has a plan in all things when he said, “He has a plan for us all, (even) when we’re on the losing side ... It’s (important) how you handle those situations. With His guidance you become stronger, as an individual and as a follower, through difficult times.”

Kaká sees things in the same way. He said, “I see disappointments as part of God’s plan because I think God really has a purpose for everything, and there is a time for all things. That’s the way I deal with things that did not turn out as I wanted.”

#### **COACH’S CORNER**

Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-27

*Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served Him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. <sup>24</sup> Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. <sup>26</sup> I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. <sup>27</sup> I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.*

Paul is historically considered one of the greatest disciples of Jesus. Yet his testimony of hardship and suffering is lengthy and tragic.

How would you feel if you were in his shoes?

Does it surprise you that someone who faithfully follows Jesus should experience so many trials and so much pain? Why or why not?

Having Jesus in your life does not eliminate problems. However, God makes some amazing promises in the Bible that can help us when we face difficulties, setbacks or broken dreams.

What do the following Scriptures promise?

Depending on the size of the group you may decide to split into smaller groups and give them one passage each to look up and report back on.

1. *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.”* Isaiah 43:2 (NIV)

*“I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid. You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.”* Psalm 23:4 (CEV)

God promises His **PRESENCE**. God says, “I’ll go with you!” There is no valley, no pain and no struggle that Jesus won’t share with you. There’s no road that Jesus won’t walk with you. You never have to go through a trial in life on your own. Why let the hurt and pain deny your access to the one Person/one relationship you need more than anything else – Jesus Christ?

2. *“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. <sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”* Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

God promises to replace our anxiety with His **PEACE**. Anxiety robs us of joy, but God’s peace restores it. This is vital, as joy gives us strength to keep on going when our circumstances appear too much for us.

3. *“God will strengthen you with His own great power so that you will not give up when troubles come, but you will be patient.”* Colossians 1:11 (NCV)

God promises His **POWER**. That's important because human energy and strength run out in difficult times, but God's energy and strength never run out. The good news is that you don't have to make it on your own resources through the tough times. God will give you His resources.

4. *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28 (NIV)

Who works for the good in all things according to this verse from the Bible?

Who is the promise for?

It is only for those who have put their trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

God promises His **PURPOSE**. We can know that God will work a good purpose through every situation – even the painful ones. This doesn't mean that all things are good. It is, however, a wonderful promise that God is at work for the good, and this promise can give us hope in the difficult and painful times in life.

What sort of good things do you think God might bring out of difficult circumstances? Give examples, if you can.

An athlete has to go through testing times in order to grow stronger mentally and physically. In the same way, God uses times of trial to get us fit for life! God can use trials to help develop our character to make us more like Jesus. He can use trials to prepare us for service. He can use trials for His glory. A great example of this is the story of Joseph in the Old Testament. At the end of the story Joseph says to his brothers who sold him into slavery, *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."* Genesis 50:20 (NIV)

Of course, the greatest example of God turning evil around for good purposes is seen in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Do you have a story you can share of how you have experienced some or all of these things (God's presence, peace, power and purpose) in your life during a time of trial?

## **WARM-DOWN**

Spend time as a group thanking God for His presence, peace, power and purpose. Take time to pray for anyone who is struggling with a present or past pain. Be sensitive. It is vital not to judge anyone who may be struggling to see God's hand in the middle of his/her difficulties.

## **EXTRA TRAINING**

### **Memory verse**

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28 (NIV)

### **Prayer/Worship Focus**

During the week make regular time to spend with God. Talk to Him about trials or difficulties you may be facing, and thank Him for His presence, power, peace and purpose. **Read Philippians 4:4-7.** As you hand

over your situation to Him, be assured that He can replace your anxiety with His perfect peace. Be prepared to come back next week and share how you have experienced these promises through your trial.

**Putting it into Practice**

Be on the alert for opportunities to express the love of Jesus to someone you know who is presently experiencing a difficult and painful time.