



FAITH
CAFÉ




Sample Episode

Ourselfs | Our God | Our World

 INCLUDED

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Open your mouth and taste, open
your eyes and see—how good God is.
Blessed are you who run to him.

Psalm 34:8, *THE MESSAGE*

In case you haven't noticed, coffee is big business these days. For the year 2006 Starbucks posted overall sales of \$7.8 billion. No wonder more and more restaurants are jumping on the ultra-cool coffee bandwagon. Panera Bread is only one of the many places you can order specialty drinks these days. Vanilla and hazelnut iced coffees can now be purchased at Dunkin' Donuts and McDonald's. Burger King just introduced Mocha BK Joe Iced Coffee (now that's a mouthful!). A battle of the brews, if you will. And how about all the indie coffeehouses in your town? A quick perusal of "coffee and tea" in a local yellow pages yielded no less than thirty-three independent establishments—everybody wants to be *the* place for your daily cup (or more) of joe.

What is it, exactly, that is attracting consumers in record numbers? The piping hot, slow-roasted beans and the variety of blends? The unmistakable aroma

and stylish decor? The cozy, inviting atmosphere, perfect for conversation among the intriguing, eclectic mix of friends who gather around their mochas, espressos, and cappuccinos?

By joe, I think we've discovered the secret. The coffeehouse craze is about more than just giant mugs of primo java with extra whipped cream and shots of syrups. It's about the flavorful community that takes shape there.

People come to hang out with others with whom they can be at ease, open, casual. They come to talk and think about the stuff of life that matters to them, to ask questions, to seek answers, to be—at the risk of sounding trite—authentic.

Sounds like something the church should be about, doesn't it?

ENTER FAITH CAFÉ

This fall Standard Publishing will unveil the first phase of Faith Café, a topical curriculum designed for use in adult Bible fellowships. This sample gives you a taste of this creative resource, with a look at a lesson from the participant and leader guides. Each quarter features thirteen unique episodes that offer a multisensory

experience. Each week you'll unpack a relevant topic such as knowing God, soul care, spiritual loneliness, greed, workaholism, the idols we worship, sharing our faith, and our responsibility to the world. In each session you'll *enter* into the environment with thoughts for reflection, *drink* in the living water of God's Word, *savor* a story about real-life struggles others have faced, *experience* what other voices have to say, and *walk* out with some practical steps to live out the truth.

CREATE A COMMUNITY

One of the unique extras that takes this resource beyond vanilla is the media element that features recommended reading, relevant Web sites, and the use of DVD clips including stories and interviews with people of influence like Larry Crabb, John Ortberg, and Stormie Omartian. Contemporary Christian artists playing at the Faith Café are also featured, including Jars of Clay, Margaret Becker, Derek Webb, Downhere, and Ginny Owens.

Tips, materials, and everything you'll need to design your own Faith Café space is available—just check out www.standardpub.com/faithcafe.

If you're interested in designing a place in your church where people can create community with others who are seeking answers to similar questions, we'd like to invite you to Faith Café. This resource is specifically written to develop a comfortable spot for members and honest seekers alike who place a high value on community, authenticity, spiritual formation, and practical service to others. Faith Café is for you if you want something beyond a lecture approach in a Bible study. If you are looking for an experiential, interactive, media-driven style of learning—then Faith Café is worth checking out.

So take a moment and read through the sample episode. Then try it out with your group. We think you'll enjoy the experience. It's not a young adult thing or the "cool club" in church. It's all about community connection—everyone is welcome.





How Do I See Myself?

ENTER

Are you feeling as if God is way off in the distance? Or maybe you're not sure where you are in your relationship with him?

Welcome God to the "café" of your inner life . . . that place where the real you lives, where the creature God made lives, where hurts and hopes and anger and joy all merge.

Offer this request: *God, as I seek to learn more about myself and about you, I ask you to forgive me of my mistakes and welcome me into your café. Thanks.*

These café conversations are about living life—about not just believing that a real spiritual experience is possible, but helping it happen. Enter the café and relax, breathe, look around. You never know what you'll find there. Today you might find you.

It's time to place an order at the Faith Café. Order your inner desires. No one is going to see this except you and God. As you think through the menu in your mind, ask yourself these questions:

- What do I hide about myself?
- What words would describe how I see myself and my relationship with God right now?
- Who do I wish I could become?
- What words do I wish described me?
- Is that order, or request, possible in my life right now? If not, why not? If so, how?

Consider it

"They cannot parody you unless they know you, and when they know you, it means you're part of the culture, and when you're part of the culture, it means you're successful."

—Joan Rivers, from an interview in *The Week*

DRINK

*Oh, oh, oh . . . How empty the city,
once teeming with people.*

*A widow, this city,
once in the front rank of nations,
once queen of the ball,
she's now a drudge in the kitchen.
She cries herself to sleep each night,
tears soaking her pillow.*

*No one's left among her lovers to sit and
hold her hand.*

Her friends have all dumped her.

—Lamentations 1:1, 2 (*The Message*)

Lamentations is a book in the Bible that depicts the Jewish nation as a widow—a sad, lonely, defeated widow. Formerly ranked at the top, the nation had fallen to the bottom. Think of hurricanes or fires ruining neighborhoods and cities. Think of terrorist attacks changing a world. The Israelites must have felt destroyed, defeated, unwelcome anywhere and by anyone. They wondered if even God wanted them anymore.

Do you ever feel as if you are at the bottom? History helps us remember that Israel did not have to remain there. They were God's chosen people—set apart by God to be his own. To be loved.

As you trek through your own journey, you can join Israel in noticing what you think of yourself and what you should do to move forward. And you can remember that you don't have to stay where you are. You too are God's own. You are loved by God.

SAVOR

Betty listened. She appreciated the speaker's honesty about the value of relationships. At one point, her mind wandered. His words about loving others lured her thoughts in a new direction. She questioned whether she had ever really loved anyone. Betty remembered the facial expression of a friend and asked herself, *What did I do to make her so angry?* She recalled the departure of a spouse and said, *Why did I blow it?* She realized that she isn't very close to many people and thought, *I can't blame them; I wouldn't be around myself if I didn't have to.*

Compare Betty's thoughts with these: "I'm so grateful to Christ Jesus for making me adequate to do this work. . . . The only credentials I brought to it were invective and witch hunts and arrogance. But I was treated mercifully because I didn't know what I was doing—didn't know who I was doing it against! Grace mixed with faith and love poured over me and into me. And all because of Jesus.

"Here's a word you can take to heart and depend on: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I'm proof—Public Sinner Number One—of someone who could never have made it apart from sheer mercy" (1 Timothy 1:12-19, *The Message*).

EXPERIENCE

Comedian Joan Rivers has had bags removed from under her eyes, two complete face-lifts, cheek implants, fat injections, brow smoothing, teeth capping, neck tightening, a tummy tuck, and a nose thinning. She is quoted as saying, "When you look better, you are treated differently. People want to be around attractive people" (from "The New and Improved Rivers," *The Week*, July 15, 2005).

Does changing your outward appearance ever make you feel better inside? Why or why not? What does the approval of others mean to you?

Look into it

- Psalm 8
- David Gregory, *Dinner With a Perfect Stranger: An Invitation Worth Considering*
www.dinnerwithaperfectstranger.com

WALK

Do you want to move from sadness in yourself to acceptance of yourself? Do you really want to stop lamenting and start rejoicing? Then realize God's love.

This doesn't mean that you have to just sweep away your doubts or your negative self-talk. Admit and confess your inner struggle. But be willing to "take out" the truth you've learned today. As you might say in a real café, "I'll get this to go!"

"God loves you so much he wants what is best for you. He also wants to know if you want what is best for yourself."

—Stephen Arterburn, *Healing Is a Choice*

Carry a mug of God's love with you as you go through your week:

- E-mail someone who feels alone. Serve that person the meal of encouragement.
- Call someone you know isn't home. Leave a short message on the answering machine and try to encourage that person with your words and tone so he or she feels accepted.
- Stare at yourself in the mirror. Tell yourself God loves you. Repeat the phrase seven times.

This week's spiritual discipline is journaling:

Write about any obstacle that is currently dragging you down or maybe hurting your relationship with God. Write your own lament. Then think about who you want to become and who God has created you to become. Write about it.



How Do I See Myself?

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Paper and pens or pencils
Faith Café DVD

ENTER

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As the leader, begin each lesson in prayer. Offer a gentle, nonthreatening chance for participants to voice their own prayers silently. Anyone who isn't a follower of Christ can be guided in a prayer of welcome (see the prayer above) that he or she can silently pray along with you.

Offer a sheet of paper and pen or pencil to each participant. Then read the text below. Remind the class that when an order is placed at this spiritual café, it is really a request, not a demand. But God longs to hear our inner desires. After a few minutes, let them hide their orders. Then move to the next part.

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—Joan Rivers, from an interview in *The Week*

Read the quote above and have a quick-hit conversation about what it means. If you have time, break your group into two sections and let them debate the truth or falsehood of the statement. Who thinks Joan Rivers's comment about being a success is right? Who doesn't? Give each group just one minute to come up with their argument and one minute to present it to the other side. End the time by asking the whole group to keep their thoughts about success and failure in mind as you read the Scripture together.

DRINK

Read aloud the passage from Lamentations. Read slowly and with a serious tone.

*Oh, oh, oh . . . How empty the city,
once teeming with people.*

A widow, this city,

once in the front rank of nations,

once queen of the ball,

she's now a drudge in the kitchen.

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GO DEEPER

Follow up the Scripture reading with a few reminders about what was going on at that time in Israel. Keep the flow personal and not academic. Let the listeners do more than realize history; help them relate to it.

Probably written by Jeremiah, the book of Lamentations is a painful confession of sadness. The nation of Israel felt defeated. Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Chaldeans (the historical Babylonians, sixth century BC). Enemies had overrun their holy places, tearing down their temple, imprisoning their king, and enslaving their people. They were asking God questions about why everything had happened and how they could get out of this disaster. You can see why this collection of poetic prayers, Lamentations, was originally called by a Hebrew word which means, "How?" Its purpose was to offer a song of wailing.

Feelings of sadness like that flow through our inner thoughts but don't hit the song list of our praise and worship services. The Israelites would read this book aloud to remind themselves about a city's falling, about sin, and about sadness. Rather than denying pain and rejection, they prayed it out corporately and regularly.

Ask the group these questions:

- How would you have felt if you were Jeremiah, writing about your nation being destroyed?
- What do you think was going on inside Jeremiah?
- The nation of Israel viewed herself as damaged villages. How might our own lives be considered damaged villages? How could confessing these verses help us to let go of our hurt?
- How many people do you know who pray just like this Scripture, feeling empty and alone as they cry themselves to sleep every night? How have you been able to reach out to someone like that? What was the response?
- When do you feel lonely or empty? What do you do about it?

SAVOR

Have a member or members of the group read this section aloud.

Betty listened. She appreciated the speaker's honesty about the value of relationships. At one point, her mind wandered. His words about loving others lured her thoughts in a new direction. She questioned whether she had ever really loved anyone. Betty remembered the facial expression of a friend and asked herself, *What did I do to make her so angry?* She recalled the departure of a spouse and said, *Why did I blow it?* She realized that she isn't very close to many people and thought, *I can't blame them; I wouldn't be around myself if I didn't have to.*

Compare Betty's thoughts with these: "I'm so grateful to Christ Jesus for making me adequate to do this work. . . . The only credentials I brought to it were invective and witch hunts and arrogance. But I was treated mercifully because I didn't know what I was doing—didn't know who I was doing it against! Grace mixed with faith and love poured over me and into me. And all because of Jesus. "Here's a word you can take to heart and depend on: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I'm proof—Public Sinner Number One—of someone who could never have made it apart from sheer mercy" (1 Timothy 1:12-19, *The Message*).

Involve the class in discussion.

1. *Voice one word that describes Betty. (For example, blaming, self-hating, condemned, guilty, lies, faults, disapproving, critical, isolated.) Was there ever a time that word could have been used to describe you? When was that?*

2. *Why do so many of us think the way Betty thinks?*

3. *Compare Betty's words and attitude with those of Paul, as seen in the letter to Timothy. How are they similar? How are they different?*

4. *Do you think it is OK for followers of Christ to be sad and express their sorrow? Why or why not?*

5. *Why do we feel pressure to appear happy and unblemished all the time?*

6. *What are some healthy ways we can admit our sadness and our failures? How could being honest with ourselves about our sin be helpful to us? to others?*

EXPERIENCE

Read or let someone read the paragraph below. Then ask the questions that follow.

Comedian Joan Rivers has had bags removed from under her eyes, two complete face-lifts, cheek implants, fat injections, brow smoothing, teeth capping, neck tightening, a tummy tuck, and a nose thinning. She is quoted as saying, "When you look better, you are treated differently. People want to be around attractive people" (from "The New and Improved Rivers," *The Week*, July 15, 2005).

Does changing your outward appearance ever make you feel better inside? Why or why not? What does the approval of others mean to you?

Thoughts to share: Watching how others view us can influence who we think we are and prompt us to find ways to change ourselves. Depending on the opinion of others can damage our view of ourselves.

Seeking applause by performing or pretending doesn't help us in changing who we really are. Nor does it truly bring success. Even the approval of others doesn't make us really better people. We are much better in life when we seek God's approval, when we accept his acceptance. Insecurity can turn into true security, even without a joke or a face-lift.

Look into it

■ Psalm 8

■ David Gregory, *Dinner With a Perfect Stranger: An Invitation Worth Considering*
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WALK

Do you want to move from sadness in yourself to acceptance of yourself? Do you want to stop lamenting and start rejoicing? Then realize God's love. This doesn't mean that you have to just sweep away your doubts or your negative self-talk. Admit and confess your inner struggle. But be willing to "take out" the truth you've learned today. As you might say in a real café, "I'll get this to go!"

Read or have someone read this quote:

“God loves you so much he wants what is best for you. He also wants to know if you want what is best for yourself.”

—Stephen Arterburn, *Healing Is a Choice*

Ask these questions: What does Arterburn’s comment say to you? What do you think he means?



Play the Episode 1 clip from the Faith Café DVD.

Ask these questions: Does God really love us? How can we be changed if we know this? How can we choose to know about God’s love? How can we tell others that God really likes them?

Read the “to go” assignments to the class, or ask them to read them, and encourage them to make a commitment to do at least one of the actions and to practice the spiritual discipline.

Carry a mug of God’s love with you as you go through your week:

- E-mail someone who feels alone. Serve that person the meal of encouragement.
- Call someone you know isn’t home. Leave a short message on the answering machine and try to encourage that person with your words and tone so he or she feels accepted.
- Look at yourself in the mirror. Tell yourself God loves you. Repeat the phrase seven times.

This week’s spiritual discipline is journaling:

Write about any obstacle that is currently dragging you down or maybe hurting your relationship with God. Write your own lament. Then think about who you want to become and who God has created you to become. Write about it.

End your class together by suggesting that each person read Psalm 8 every day for a week. This can help prepare their minds for the next phase. You may want to read it aloud to them.

*O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory
above the heavens.
From the lips of children and infants
you have ordained praise
because of your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.
When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?
You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet:
all flocks and herds,
and the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air,
and the fish of the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.
O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

NOTES



YOU'VE HAD A TASTE,
now what are you waiting for?

ENTER DRINK SAVOR
EXPERIENCE WALK

For more information on the materials available and everything you need to create a Faith Café space in your church, go to www.standardpub.com/faithcafe.

**USE THIS DVD WITH THE SAMPLE LESSON
INCLUDED IN THIS BROCHURE.**



FAITH
CAFÉ

YOUR SUNDAY MORNING BLEND.

To place your order or find out more, ask your Christian supplier or visit www.standardpub.com