

### *Before the Session*

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the podcast for this session (Share the link via email or social media)

### *Intro*

Ask the group:

- Paramahansa Yogananda once said that "the season of failure is the best time for sowing the seeds of success." What do you think that he meant by that?
- Who are some people who have inspired you by overcoming their failures and how did they do it?
- What are the most important lessons that you have learned from your own failures?
- What is a current example of failure do you think might be turned around for something good, and how do you think that might come about?
- What role do failures play in your faith?

### *Content*

Read together Ezekiel 17:22–24 and watch the Bible Background Video. Ask questions like:

- Which do you think is worse in excess and why: optimism or pessimism?
- Which of the two, optimism or pessimism, would you say describes your first reaction when facing a hard time and why?
- Recalling the Buechner quote from the video, "The worst isn't the last thing about the world. It's the next to the last thing. The last thing is the best." In what ways have your personal experiences borne this out?
- To what degree do you think that the sense of things being made right over time is a function of God's intervention or the working of the broader sweep of History and why?
- In what ways might your answer to that question affect the way you view struggling through difficult situations?

## □ *Closure*

Continue by asking:

- How do you know when someone is facing a deep and seemingly hopeless struggle?
- What is the most trite slogan you've ever heard for people who struggle and why do you think that?
- Some peoples' faith may be shattered by life's difficulties, while others' may be built on it. What are the best ways to relate to someone with either mindset when they are struggling?
- What can we do, on an ongoing basis, that might provide some sense of support for the struggling people we know?

Close with a prayer that you can all learn to show others that God has better things in store for them than their current troubles.

***By David Adams***