**Table Talk**

**Sermon Series: Tough As Nails - Ministry**

 **March 14, 2021**

**Introduction (8 min)**

Table Talk Groups (45 minute study) begin by watching the video and sharing the story below, then open up the discussion with the questions provided.

Southside Home (35 minute study) can skip to “Starting the Discussion” as a follow up to the worship experience.

**Table Talk Video: Tough As Nails - Ministry**

When I was 8 years old, my grandfather, Ralph or Pawpaw as well called him, passed away from cancer. He wouldn’t want that to be what you knew about him though. He would want you to know how he fought.

Much of his life was spent fighting. His father passed away when he was a young boy and he quickly assumed the role of the protective older brother. Just a few years later at the age of 13 he quit school and went to work. It was the 1930’s and work was hard to come by. He fought to keep his family out of poverty and ended up working with a logging crew in Vermont and New Hampshire.

A few years later, he continued fighting, not only to help provide for his mom and siblings, but also for his country in World War II. He served through that war and then continued the fight in Korea in the early 1950’s.

Around 1955, Sargent C. Ralph Phillips returned home and started fighting for a family of his own. He fought through troubled memories of war, at times he fought with alcohol, and he fought to care for his sons through two divorces. Once they started families of their own, he fought to help his sons start and build a family business.

When I was 7 years old, he faced his hardest fight yet. He passed out at home and was rushed to the hospital. He was bleeding internally and so low on blood the paramedic struggled to find a vein for an IV. Barely alive, he arrived at the hospital and was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. He was given 3 months to live.

As he fought for his life with cancer, he was also fighting a spiritual battle for the life of his soul. During that time he researched every religion he could find. He told my dad that he would do anything that gave him more time with his family. After a few months of looking into everything from Buddhism to Satanism, he said to my dad, “I’ve studied them all. Only Christianity proves to be what it claims.” He prayed the prayer of salvation and invited Jesus to be his Lord, even if cancer claimed his body.

Pawpaw was tough as nails. Even when the doctors said his body had nothing left, he fought on for an additional 3 months, twice as long as they told him he would live. But his greatest battle wasn’t over cancer or war. It was for the destiny of his soul and the legacy he would leave for his family. We were his ministry, the people he most cared for. In the end, he helped point us all toward Jesus. We saw in those last few months the transformative power of the Gospel and the life Jesus gives that even cancer can’t take away.

- Pastor Reggie Phillips

**Prayer (2 minutes)**

Jesus, you are our source of strength and our eternal hope. Make us aware of your strength and presence as we study your Word together. Open our eyes to see the power you make available to us and the determination your Spirit offers as we minister to those around us. We ask in Jesus’ name, amen.

**Starting the Discussion (3 minutes)**

1. Who is someone in your life who displayed tenacity and grit in the face of hardship, tragedy, or great loss? Have you ever told them how much their example has inspired you?

**Unfolding the Biblical Story (24 minutes)**

**Invite someone to read Mark 9:17-19**

1. Whose job was it to minister to this man and his son?
2. Who was Jesus referring to when he said, “You faithless people”?
3. Take a moment and look back over the first 9 chapters of Mark’s Gospel. What other miracles had the disciples already seen Jesus perform in his ministry?

**Read Mark 9:20-23**

1. What long term struggles have you faced in life that you sometimes doubt God can deliver you from? Have you ever prayed, “If you can…”?
2. This father asks Jesus to take pity on him and his son. Have you ever felt like God has forgotten about you, not paying attention to your needs or suffering?
3. Does Jesus’ reply to this father give you hope? Why is this hope necessary to carry out our ministry within God’s Kingdom?

**Invite someone to read Mark 9:24-27**

1. Do you identify with the father’s honest confession about believing but not at the level he should? In what area of life do you want Jesus to help your unbelief?
2. Even in the face of a doubting father, a sick boy, a crowd hungry for attention, and disciples who failed to do what he called them to do, Jesus still follows through on his ministry. What circumstances in life have caused you to be distracted from the ministry God is calling you to?
3. What can you do to stay empowered, focused, and determined in order to carry out the ministry that God has invited you into?

**Prayer (2 minutes)**

Father, you have called every one of us to ministry. You ministered to people and now you minister by your Holy Spirit working through the Church. Help us to stay focused on ministry amid the distractions of this world and to have the strength and determination to see your Kingdom come and will be done in our lives and the lives of those we serve. In Jesus’ name, amen.

**Wrapping Up (2 minutes)**

See if anyone has lingering questions or insights to share from your time of study and prayer. Summarize the group discussion as a reminder of what you learned together.

**Scripture Challenge (4 minutes)**

This week try to memorizing John 14:12. Take a few minutes to practice/repeat it together as a group. Find a way to keep the words of Jesus before you as you live out the ministry Jesus is calling you to!