

## THE SEED OF JOY IN THE SOIL OF SORROW LESSON NOTES

When have you experienced times of sorrow or hardship that you thought you would never get through? How did you make it through that time of grieving or difficulty?

What times in the Bible show that God's people are not immune from difficulty, hardship, tragedy or grief? Describe what you know about the Babylonian destruction and exile. What was it that kept the exiles from giving up?

What must the exiles who finally returned to Jerusalem have felt on their return home? What were the good things? What were the bad things? How did God turn their sorrow into joy?

Dr. Martin said, "Christians are not immune to hardship and sorrow." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? How does this affect your faith?

Read Psalm 137:1-4. What is the feeling reflected in this psalm? What would it be like to be "exiled in the land of sorrows?" What seeds of joy were planted in hope – Jeremiah? By anyone living in "the land of sorrows?"

Read Psalm 126. What is the feeling reflected in the psalm? What does it say we are to do in the times of sowing? Why is this so difficult?

What difficult thing has happened in your life since you took home one of the potted plants until now? How have things changed? What seeds of joy have begun to bloom since you first received your plant? (or since the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>?)

How would the words from the Bible, "and it came to pass," be of some comfort?

Read Romans 8:28. What is the promise? Who is the promise for? How is this a seed of joy that is planted? Where have you seen a seed of joy rise up from the soil of sorrow?

Read Matthew 26:36-42. What soil of sorrow did Jesus experience in the Garden of Gethsemane? What seeds of joy later came to grow and blossom?

What can you do in your times of sorrow to plant seeds in hope that they will give rise to joy in the future? (what kinds of things can you do for someone else that Christ might cause to blossom into joy?)