Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *When Life Gets Hard*, these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

The Point: Suffering is a part of living in a fallen world.

Introduction: Many years ago, Art Linkletter had a popular children's program in which he interviewed children. Their answers were often amusing. He wrote a couple of books based on these interviews, and he included a few stories that were sent in by parents and teachers. Linkletter's father was a Baptist preacher, so he particularly enjoyed stories involving the Bible and church. He told of a teacher who instructed her class to draw a picture of a Bible story. One boy drew a picture of a long sports car with three people inside. The teacher was puzzled, and she asked him what Bible story it depicted. The boy replied, “That’s the Lord driving Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden.”

The biblical account of Adam and Eve is more than just a story. It is the historic account of an event that literally changed the entire course of human history. God created a perfect world, but no one can deny that our world is not perfect now. It is rife with poverty, pollution, wickedness, and various forms of injustice. How did it get that way? The opening chapters of Genesis provide the answer. However, the New Testament reminds us that a better day is coming, and that will be when God takes us home to heaven.

I. The reason for our suffering.

A. Suffering is a result of the fall.
   1. The fall in the Garden of Eden was a real, historic event.
      a. Jesus believed it (Matthew 19:4-5).
      b. Paul believed it (1 Timothy 2:12-14).
   2. Our whole theology of human sinfulness is based on the fall.
      a. We inherited sin and death from Adam (Romans 5:12-14).
      b. Various philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists have tried to explain why there is so much evil in the world, but none of their explanations are sufficient.

B. The effects of the fall.
   1. On Eve.
      a. She would experience pain and suffering in childbirth.
         • Childbirth itself is not a result of the fall, but the suffering that goes along with it is. Any mother knows that childbirth is still
painful today, but before the advent of modern medicine, it could be life-threatening.

b. “Thy desire shall be to thy husband....” – Scholars disagree on the details of this verse, but they generally agree that it denotes some level of tension between the man and the woman.

- Ravi Zacharias tells of the time when one of his seminary professors made the comment, “Love is hard work.” He did not agree with the professor, and he voiced the reasons for his disagreement. The professor let him have his say, and then he asked, “Zacharias, are you married?” He admitted he was not. The professor replied, “Then sit down and shut up. You don’t know what you’re talking about!” Zacharias added that he did get married a year later, and it wasn’t long before he learned that the professor was correct: love is indeed hard work!

II. The remedy for our suffering.

A. God has promised better days for us.
   1. We are waiting for the “manifestation of the sons of God”.
      a. Paul was referring to the Second Coming of Jesus.
      b. People often mock followers of Christ (“sons of God”) today, but one day they will see who we truly are (1 John 3:1-2).
   2. We will be “delivered from the bondage of corruption”.
      a. The world will be free from the curse brought on by Adam’s sin.
      b. We will be free from sickness and death.

B. Our hope of heaven enables us to endure suffering in this life.
   1. In the meantime, all of creation “groans”.
   2. How do we know the promise of heaven is real?
      a. The Holy Spirit is the “firstfruits”. That is, He is a mere sample of what waits for us in eternity.
      b. The joy and the peace that we currently have in Christ is nothing compared to the joy and peace of heaven.

Conclusion: I’ve been a history buff ever since I was little, and it was always my dream to visit Washington, DC. Finally, in the fall of 2003, I decided to do it. I drove all the way from Missouri to Virginia, and it took me a couple of days. I spent the night in Manassas, about an hour out of Washington, and I planned to drive there the next day. I had heard about DC traffic, so I did not want to arrive until around 10:00 a.m. Alas, I soon discovered that DC traffic is a mess even at that hour. I must confess that I hate traffic jams with a passion. I realize they’re a way of life in many cities (and the residents of those cities are probably laughing at me as they read this), but I truly hate traffic jams! As I sat there, stuck in traffic, I began to feel sorry for myself. I thought, “I shouldn’t have come here! This is all going to be a big waste of time!” Finally, the traffic began to flow a little more smoothly, and I made my way towards the city. As I drew closer, I could see the Washington Monument in the distance, and my heart began to beat a little faster. As I crossed the Potomac River, I could see the Lincoln Memorial on my right, and far off in the distance was the Capitol. The sight brought a lump to my throat. The trip there had been long and difficult, but it was worth it.
Like my trip to DC, life in this world is a long and difficult journey. We face numerous headaches and heartaches along the way. Life is often unfair, and sometimes we wonder if it’s really worth it. For followers of Jesus Christ, though, better days are coming! One day we will enter the pearly gates of heaven, and we will be free from pain and suffering forever. As an old gospel song says, “Heaven will surely be worth it all!”

1 Art Linkletter, Kids STILL Say The Damndest Things! Pocket Books Inc.: New York, 1961, p. 30

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