

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

John 16:33

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." - John 16:33

Main Point: Understanding suffering in the Bible helps us deal with it better

Introduction: Use the following questions to introduce the topic of discussion -

What is one thing you quit doing as a kid or teenager that you wish you would have stuck with? Was it playing a sport? Learning an instrument? A difficult class in school?

Why did you quit? Looking back now, why do you wish you would have suffered through it?

In times of suffering, we sometimes cry out, "Why me?" Other times we see tragedies that happen to others—loved ones and those in distant countries who are suddenly wiped out in devastation. The pain strikes us as random and meaningless. "Why?" is probably one of the oldest questions in history. Agnostic philosopher, David Hume, once famously said; "Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?" Even believers in the Bible have asked that question, and we still ask today. Jesus tells us there will be suffering, but how we handle it makes all the difference.

Read John 16:33. A few things we need to know about suffering are:

1) **JESUS ISN'T THE AUTHOR OF SUFFERING.**

Have a volunteer read **Psalm 100**. What reasons does the psalmist give to praise God? Which reason most motivates you to praise Him?

Who might not think God is good (v. 5)? Why might someone feel this way? How should Christians respond to such an attitude?

Read **Genesis 1:31; Exodus 18:9; Psalm 34:8;** and **Philippians 1:6**. Each of the passages we just read point to God's goodness on display. What action of God is praised in each of these passages?

What evidence of God's goodness do you see when you look at creation? What evidence of God's goodness do you see in your own life?

2) **SIN IS THE SOURCE OF SUFFERING.**

Read **Genesis 3:16-21**. What was the result of Adam and Eve's sin? What was God's response despite their disobedience (v.21)? What does this tell us about God's nature?

Pastor Erik pointed out from **Joshua 24:15** our ability to choose freely to love God and be obedient to Him, or to rebel. How have you been affected by another's choice to sin? Do you wish sometimes we did not have free will to avoid suffering in this world? Explain.

Sin upset the world's balance. God didn't. The result of that sin has been suffering. Does that make it any easier to swallow? Why or why not?

3) **JESUS WILL CONQUER SUFFERING.**

Read **John 16:16-20**. How can you rely on the Holy Spirit this week to help you endure "the little whiles" of pain before you experience His peace?

What steps can you take to be more aware of all that Christ has done (and is doing) for you in working all things for your good (**Romans 8:28**)? How can we encourage each other in this area?

What is one circumstance in your life in which you are longing for Jesus to overcome? What would it look like for you to claim the truth of **John 16:33** as you confront that situation with trust and hope in Him?

Apply It:

Read James 5:10-16. What are some specific ways that we can help each other learn to be patient as we endure the trials of this life and wait for Jesus' return? Why does it help to pray in groups when difficult times arise? What task or problem are you facing that could benefit from intercessory prayer? What specific things can we pray for on your behalf? Pray for those things now.

Pray:

Close by thanking God for the gift of community, other people to help us bear the burden of suffering and draw us back to His presence when we stray. Pray that your group would be a place where we are constantly praying for one another and encouraging one another on in patience and joy.

Coming up at VillageChurch:

March 18th - The BIG Serve (Prayer walks, street clean up, Yard work for disabled, Music outreach)

April 1st - Easter Sunday (VillageKids Choir singing)

April 22nd - BIG Tent Revival

May 13th - Mother's Day: Baby Dedication, VillageKids Choir singing