

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Ask: **Is suffering always a negative event in people's lives?** Allow several learners to share their answers. Encourage learners to try to list reasons why suffering or difficulties can be beneficial and to share any personal examples that they would.

Explain that today we will look at Job's life and how suffering brought about great gain in his life.

Option 2

Invite willing learners to share a time when they experienced suffering. Ask: **What questions did you ask? What was your attitude toward God? Was there any long-term benefit to you through your suffering?**

Explain that today we will look at how Job responded to suffering in his life.

Review the Message . . .

Suffering is often unexplainable.

- **Job followed God's commands faithfully.**
- **Job's attention came from his integrity.**
- **Job was unaware of spiritual conflict.**

Discussion

- Enlist a learner to read Job 1:1-12.
- Describe Job's service to God. How did God describe Job?
- Why did Satan notice Job? Why was God pointing him out to Satan?
- Was Job ever made aware of the spiritual conflict that arose in heaven?

Application . . .

- What is our first reaction to seeing that God pointed Job out to Satan? What does our answer indicate about our belief in God's sovereignty and goodness?
- Why does our culture often feel that believers who are faithful do not deserve to suffer? Is that a biblical perspective?

- What is the point in serving God faithfully if we may encounter the same, if not greater, hardships as everyone else?
- Would suffering actually be easier if we understood the reason? Why does it matter?

God is always worthy of worship

- **God remains in control of all situations.**
- **God's worth is not dependent on circumstances.**

Discussion

- Enlist several learners to read Job 1:13-2:13.
- List the categories of loss that Job experienced.
- Looking at Job 2:3, 5-6, who was actually in control of Job's suffering?
- In Job 2:3 God asserts responsibility for Job's first round of sufferings. What does this indicate about God's supreme control in the world?
- In Job 1:12 and 2:5-6, Satan basically asks God for permission to cause harm to Job. What does this indicate about God's control over Satan?
- How did Job respond to these disasters?
- Why did Job praise God?

Application . . .

- Why can it make us feel uneasy to know that God gave permission to harm Job?
- What kind of God would He be if He were not in control? Would we rather He be helpless to Satan's desires or in control of His plan? Why?
- How is there comfort in knowing that He is control in the midst of our suffering?
- Why is it often difficult to praise God in our suffering?
- What are we saying about God if we believe that His worth is determined by our circumstances? Would He truly be God if He were dependent upon our lives?

Suffering is not partial.

- **Job's suffering was not a product of discipline, sin, or disbelief.**
- **Followers of God are not immune to suffering.**

Discussion

- Invite a learner to summarize the basic gist of the interactions between Job and his "friends." (The ESV Study Bible outline in the introduction to the book of Job is thorough in summarizing the content if you wish to go further in depth.) Read Job 5:17-18. What did Job's friends assert about Job?
- What did their assertion assume about God?
- Enlist a learner to read Job 42:7. Why did God rebuke Job's friends? What did God's rebuke of the friends indicate about their beliefs?

Application . . .

- How can we be true friends to those who are suffering?
- Why do we often say things contrary to God's word in an effort to comfort or give advice? Why is this so dangerous?
- Why does it scare us to think that believers should be immune from suffering?
- How can suffering in the life of a believer bring glory to God?

God often reveals Himself during suffering.

- **God remains supreme at all times.**
- **True understanding of God demands submission.**

Discussion

- Enlist several learners to read Job 38-39.
- How did God respond to Job's request for vindication from God?
- Describe the picture that God painted of Himself to Job.
- Enlist a learner to read Job 42:1-6.
- How did Job respond to God's conversation?
- What does Job admit about his knowledge of God's ways?
- How did Job indicate that he had grown in his knowledge of God?
- What role did Job's suffering play in revealing God more deeply to Job more than prosperity could have?

Application . . .

- How can it be comforting to rest in the truth that we do not understand God's ways? How can it be scary or unsettling? Why?
- Why should we trust and take comfort in the God who is supreme in all matters?
- Why does suffering often help us to know God more deeply than times of non-suffering?
- What are questions that we often ask during times of suffering? What are questions that we should ask during times of suffering?