

Small Group Questions | September 30th, 2018

Explore God – Why does God allow pain and suffering?

Passages Referenced: Gen 45:4–8; Exo 3:7–8; Job 38–40; Psa 22:24; 113:1–3; Isa 53:3–6; 1 Pet 4:12–13; John 1; 3:3; 19:41; Rev 21:1–6

Introductory Comments to Group Leaders:

Greetings all. I want to begin by apologizing for copying the wrong video links in last week's notes. I've double-checked the links for this week's question. Also, please be reassured that fully addressing every question below will likely take more time than your meeting allows. As leaders, prayerfully select the questions that you believe would be the best to build up your group with its particular needs.

Pulse of the World – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCY8UKeQ5ek>

The Curiosity Collective – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjcpW_kPYq0

I understand that a number of you have had problems getting onto the Facebook Group for Explore God Discussion Group Leaders. I changed the group from “secret” to “closed.” That will hopefully make it easier to get on while still protecting confidentiality. Here is a link to that page.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/284859195451504/edit/?source=edit_privacy

If you are a group leader and ask to join the group I will welcome you.

“**Why does God allow pain and suffering?**” is noted as the question most people would like to ask God. There is no easy pat answer. For all we know, our infinite God has a unique reason for every situation and every individual going through pain and suffering. In trying to address the question, this Sunday's sermon traced the theme through various biblical passages and genres. Most of those passages are listed in the “Passages Referenced” above. I have focused the questions on the “major dots” and how they are connected.

Again this week, I put some answers to the questions in bold text at the bottom of this document. The numbers correspond to the numbers of the questions.

Sermon Recap: If there is an all-powerful, all-knowing God as we Christians believe, the fact that we don't know why He allows pain and suffering is not a valid reason to believe He does not exist or that He does not have reasons we simply don't know. Although we can't completely understand **why** God allows pain and suffering, the Bible tells us several things about the **what**— what God does in the midst of our pain and suffering. He hears, sees, knows about, is with us in, and refines us by our pain and suffering. He will ultimately eliminate it as part of the new creation in Christ at the final resurrection. In the meantime we believe His promises and wait.

Hook: A Question to Help Ignite Conversation

Please show one or both of the videos above, depending on what you think will be most helpful to your group. Allow a few minutes for comments.

Look: (Please read this to your group.): We're going to limit the scope of our questions to a paradigm of how God responds to His people's suffering (Exo 3:7-8), a prophesy about the coming Messianic King (Isa 53:3–6), and John's writings (John 2:1–12 and Rev 21) that give a glimpse of what God will ultimately do with pain and suffering.

Read Exodus 3:7–8, which contain a part of God's call to Moses from the burning bush.

1. List all of the verbs found in verses Exo 3:7–8. What do we learn about **what God does** in response to His people’s pain and suffering in this particular situation?

Read Isaiah 53:3–6

- Remind one another that this passage was written more than 500 years before the birth of Jesus. It is one of five “servant” songs in Isaiah that describes the coming “Servant of the Lord” whom Isaiah presents here as “The Suffering Servant.”
2. What words strike you in the description of the suffering servant in Isa 53:3–6?
 3. How does the way God delivers His people in Exodus differ from the way the Suffering Servant in Isa 53 accomplishes deliverance?
 4. What possible parallels do you find between this Suffering Servant of Isa 53 and Jesus?

Read John 2:1–12 – Remember this passage comes on the heels of John 1 where Jesus was presented as the promised Messiah, God incarnate who participated in the original creation and now comes to bring a new creation—The Light coming into the darkness speaking as the living word of God.

5. This is the first “sign” (miracle) that John records after Jesus entered the world as God incarnate. The sermon suggested that this sign gives a glimpse of what Jesus would ultimately do with pain and suffering in His new creation. Can you recall three truths from this sign passage that give an image of that future reality?

Illustrations:

Illustrations and quotes can be found on the “Sermon Slides” link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org

From our study of the passage we see the basis for the truths communicated in the sermon.

Took: *Applying the message to our lives.*

Practical Applications:

1. Have you seen the Exo 3:7–8 paradigm of God saying, “I have seen/heard your cries ... I know your suffering ... I will be with you ...” during times of your own pain and suffering?
2. Can you tell about a time you are aware of when God used pain and suffering in your life to refine you?
3. What are some current pains and sufferings within our group through which we can come alongside one another in trusting God and waiting?
4. How does the promise that the best is yet to come when God will ultimately do away with pain and suffering impact the way you consider pain and suffering today?
5. Is the Holy Spirit leading you to share something He has revealed to you through this week’s sermon and study with someone else?

Prayer/Verse: “Lord, when we and those we care about experience pain and suffering, remind us that you have a perfectly good reason for allowing it. When we want to know the **why**, remind us that you hear our cries and you join us in our pain. Thank you for coming as the Suffering Servant to take our sin upon yourself and make us new creations. And thank you that the best is yet to come when there will no longer be any pain or suffering.”

What we hope members glean from the passage.

1. "I have seen" ... "I have heard" ... "I know" ... "I have come to deliver" ... "I will bring"
2. Despised ... rejected ... man of sorrows ... acquainted with grief ... stricken... smitten ... afflicted ... pierced ... crushed ... chastised ... wounded ...
3. In Exo 3:7-8 God intervened as the conqueror of those causing His people's pain and suffering. In Isa 53:3-6 God intervened as the sufferer who delivered His people by becoming their substitute.
4. Pretty much everything listed in answer 2 immediately above.
5. Jesus creates something new out of the old ... He creates abundance where there was scarcity ... The best is saved for last. This would be a good time to reinforce John's allusions to New Creation and Resurrection (on the 3rd day.)