



WEEK 3 - WHY DOES GOD ALLOW PAIN AND SUFFERING?

MESSAGE BIG IDEA

While God does not provide the reason for each experience of pain, through Jesus he does provide a way to face suffering with hope and courage rather than bitterness and despair.

SCRIPTURE

Habakkuk 1:2-3, John 16:33

ICE BREAKER AND OPENING THOUGHT

The purpose of these questions is to start a conversation. Don't worry about everyone sharing something life-changing, just get everyone comfortable talking and sharing. There is an additional video resource available for this week produced by Explore God, if you'd like to watch it as a group.

LIFE APPLICATION

As we discuss the topic, try to avoid common, yet often unhelpful responses like "Everything happens for a reason" or "You just need to pray harder."

Cultural influences often make pain and suffering even more challenging to process. Use these questions to explore a few cultural lies we've absorbed and how they influence our experiences.

The goal of life is to be happy. Help individuals recognize how this influences their processing of pain and suffering. This lie is deeply rooted in American culture; we consider the pursuit of happiness an inalienable right. "In the secular view, suffering is never seen as a meaningful part of life but only as an interruption." –Tim Keller

If I do good, I'll be rewarded. If I do bad, I'll be punished (Karma). The Bible does not support this belief... "He (referring to God) causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." –Matthew 5:45b, yet many have endured the deep shame of past mistakes. Help the group explore how their shame plays into how they experience/process pain & suffering.

I have to be OK now. Encourage the group to explore how they may numb or ignore pain and suffering to avoid it. Healing takes time and trying to circumvent the pain does not make healing faster. Aspirin and ibuprofen can slow down healing because inflammation is an important part of the cleaning and rebuilding process of healing a fracture.

Additional Passages on suffering: Romans 5:3-5; 1 Peter 4:1; 1 Peter 5:10; James 1:2-4; 12

CHALLENGE

Invite God to reveal himself to you in the trials you are facing. Pray this prayer, "God, if you are real, make yourself real to me in my pain and suffering." Pray this prayer daily over this next week with an expectation of seeing God at work.