
If God Is Good, Then Why Is There Suffering?

How we suffer:

1. Self-**INFLECTED**
Romans 7
2. **INFLECTED** by others **DIRECTLY**
Genesis 4:1-16
3. **INFLECTED** by others **INDIRECTLY**
Genesis 16; Psalm 83:1-6
4. **FALL** of **NATURE**
Matthew 14:30
5. **FALL** of **BODY**
Luke 5:17-26
6. **EMPATHETIC**
Luke 19:41-44
7. **PREVENTATIVE**
Numbers 22:25
8. **DISCIPLINE**
Romans 5:3-5
9. **MISSIONAL**
2 Corinthians 11:21-29

The gifts of suffering:

1. Leads to **REPENTANCE**
2. Causes us to rely on **GOD DEEPER**
3. Points to a need for **REDEMPTION** of ourselves and our world
4. **SANCTIFIES** us

What do I do? Pray Jesus will:

1. Help me to **ENDURE** the suffering I can't **FIX**.
2. Give me His **SPIRIT** to **CHANGE** the suffering I can **FIX**.
3. Grant me the **WISDOM** to know the **DIFFERENCE**.



Life Group Study Questions

For the week of April 26, 2020

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or something that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. Christopher talked about the nine ways we can suffer. Looking back at that list, can you think of an example for at least four of the ways, when you or someone you know personally experienced the same kind of suffering?
2. The responses people have when they face challenges, uncertainty and suffering can vary greatly. What are some ways you've noticed the people around you responding to difficult circumstances?

Do you think people's responses differ if what they are going through is self-inflicted suffering as opposed to suffering that is outside of their control? If so, how?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Christian author C. S. Lewis reflects what we heard this weekend about suffering when he wrote, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." How have you seen the truth of this quote reflected in your experience?

How might the following passages help us understand the role of suffering in our lives and the attitude God wants us to have toward our suffering?

James 1:2-4 *New International Version (NIV)* ² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Hebrews 5:7-8 *New International Version (NIV)* ⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

1 Peter 1:6-7 *New International Version (NIV)* ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Romans 5:3-5 *New International Version (NIV)* ³ Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Based on the above passages, what is most challenging for you to accept about hardship?

Is there someone in your life who has gone through great difficulty and lived out the truths taught in these passages regarding suffering?

Why do you think some people can go through hardship and come out better, while some go through it and come out bitter?

Christopher listed four “gifts” we can receive from suffering. Can you think of a time in your life when you’ve experienced one or more of these gifts?

2. The Book of Psalms has a lot to say about our response to suffering. In fact, over half of the 150 Psalms are classified as “lament” psalms because they express concern or sorrow over a difficult situation the author is facing. Each lament psalm has at least three similar elements – description of the present need or situation, a call for help and a commitment to praise God despite the circumstance. Read Psalm 86 and identify each of these elements.

Psalm 86 *New International Version (NIV)*

¹ Hear me, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

² Guard my life, for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God;

³ have mercy on me, Lord, for I call to you all day long.

⁴ Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you.

⁵ You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.

⁶ Hear my prayer, LORD; listen to my cry for mercy.

⁷ When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.

⁸ Among the gods there is none like you, Lord; no deeds can compare with yours.

⁹ All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name.

¹⁰ For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.

¹¹ Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

¹² I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever.

¹³ For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.

¹⁴ Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God; ruthless people are trying to kill me— they have no regard for you.

¹⁵ But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

¹⁶ Turn to me and have mercy on me; show your strength in behalf of your servant; save me, because I serve you just as my mother did.

¹⁷ Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

What else do you notice David included in this lament?

Because of this structure, these psalms provide a great model for us on how to pray when we’re suffering due to difficult circumstances. In light of what we’re all currently going through, jot down one or two thoughts about yourself or others under each of the elements.

Description of a present need (How is this affecting you or others?)

Call for help (What would you like God to do for you or others?)

Commitment to praise (What is true about God that you can praise Him for?)

Reflection on who God is (What aspects of God's character are most important to you in the midst of this?)

Now use those thoughts to express your own lament prayer to God.

How free do you feel bringing your "laments" to God?

What is most challenging for you to praise and thank God for in the midst of a difficult season in life?

TAKING IT HOME

1. Psalm 23 has been a source of comfort and hope for many going through difficult times. Take a few moments to meditate on the points of hope in this psalm that could be of help in the midst of our current situation.

A psalm of David. New Living Translation

¹The Lord is my shepherd;

I have all that I need.

²He lets me rest in green meadows;

he leads me beside peaceful streams.

³ He renews my strength.

He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.

⁴Even when I walk

through the darkest valley,

I will not be afraid,

for you are close beside me.

Your rod and your staff

protect and comfort me.

⁵You prepare a feast for me

in the presence of my enemies.

You honor me by anointing my head with oil.

My cup overflows with blessings.

⁶Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me

all the days of my life,

and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

2. Looking back on the three-part prayer Christopher ended his message with, which one of the three is the biggest challenge for you with all that is changing in your world?



Several of North Coast's partners are in GREAT need of non-perishables in order to support the underserved populations that are struggling during this COVID Crisis. You CAN help by driving to your campus on Saturday, May 2nd between 9am-12pm and donating canned goods. Go to northcoastcommunityservice.org for all the details.

For resources during quarantine, visit the [COVID-19 Resources](#) page at northcoastchurch.com for a variety of options.