

## Message Discussion Guide

# THE GOSPEL, GOD'S SUFFICIENCY, AND SUFFERING

*The Church at Brook Hills,*

*Dr. David Platt*

*August 17, 2008*

*Job 3-31*

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**

Invite learners to think about a time in their lives when they have experienced suffering. Ask the following questions:

- Did you ever ask God, "Why do I have to go through this?"
- What comforted you during that time of suffering?
- How did this time of suffering affect your relationship with God?

Lead the learners to personalize suffering. Suffering affects everyone. It is present in our lives often and sometimes the effects of suffering linger, therefore it is imperative that we have a proper perspective on suffering.

### **Option 2**

Discuss the following questions:

- Has anyone ever asked you why God has allowed them to go through the suffering that they are experiencing?
- What was your response?
- Have you ever asked God why He allowed you to go through suffering?
- What was His response?
- What would your response be today if someone were to ask you why they were experiencing suffering?

Explain to the learners that it is o.k. and even Biblical to ask "why?" if you ask with faith. Suffering affects everyone. It is present in our lives often and sometimes the effects of suffering linger, therefore it is imperative that we have a proper perspective on suffering. This exercise will also demonstrate to the learners that their knowledge, perspective, and experience are limited.

## **Review the Message . . .**

### **The Sufficiency of God in Suffering...**

- **When the pain of suffering persists, God is still \_\_\_\_\_ present \_\_\_\_\_.**
  - **We want an \_\_\_\_\_ explanation \_\_\_\_\_.**
  - **He gives us \_\_\_\_\_ Himself \_\_\_\_\_.**

### **Discussion Questions**

- Enlist a volunteer to read Job 3:1-26. What is Job's response to the lingering effects of the suffering he has experienced? (Despair at ever being born.)

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- What is the main question that he asks? (see. 3:11, 12, 16, 20, 23) Lead the learners to identify with Job and see that the first question that people usually ask during suffering is, "Why?"
- Why do you think people feel that what they need is an explanation of why they are suffering?
- Enlist a volunteer to read Job 7:17-19. What does this passage say about God's presence with us?
- How did God demonstrate His presence with us in Christ in the midst of our suffering?

#### Application . . .

- Invite a learner to share a time when someone's presence was the relief that they needed while suffering.
  - Ask the following questions: How do you feel when you are suffering and someone tries to give their thoughts on what you're going through? Does this ever completely comfort you?
  - In what ways have you experienced God's presence while you were suffering?
  - Why is it comforting to know that God is with us in the midst of our suffering?
- **When the gifts we enjoy are gone, God is still good.**
    - **A false gospel...**
      - **Sees suffering as evidence of the displeasure of God.**
    - **The true gospel...**
      - **Sees suffering as a means to more deeply treasure God.**

#### Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read Job 8:3-7. What does Job's friend, Bildad, say about the suffering of Job's children and Job himself? (Suffering follows sin and prosperity follows righteousness).
- All of Job's friends tried to convince him that he was suffering because of some sin in his life. Read Job 9:22-24. What does Job say about suffering? (God afflicts both the righteous and the wicked).
- David defined suffering as "*the taking away of things of this world that we enjoy – our reputation, success, esteem among peers, job, money, friends, health, sight, hearing, spouse, children, etc.*" Do you agree with this definition? Why or why not?
- How can the loss of things in our life actually help us in terms of eternity? (Lead the learners to see that if God is our treasure, when one of these things is taken away, it drives us to cling to God and thus to know God more. Suffering is then, not something that can defeat us.)
- How does Jesus' death on the cross give us a proper perspective of suffering? (Lead the learners to see that Jesus pleased the Father perfectly, yet He suffered more than anyone in history. Therefore suffering cannot always be tied to sin and prosperity does not always follow righteousness.)

#### Application . . .

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- What are ways that we promote a “false gospel” concerning suffering? (I.e. What are ways that we elevate God’s gifts above God Himself?)
- How can treasuring God help us to face suffering? Ask the group to give specific examples.
- How can suffering actually lead us to happiness? (If God is our treasure and suffering drives us closer to God, suffering will actually lead us to greater satisfaction).
- **In the confusion of our circumstances, God is all-\_\_\_\_\_wise\_\_\_\_\_.**
  - **The limited wisdom of man...**
    - **We lack \_\_\_\_\_knowledge\_\_\_\_\_.**
    - **We lack \_\_\_\_\_perspective\_\_\_\_\_.**
    - **We lack \_\_\_\_\_experience\_\_\_\_\_.**
  - **The unlimited wisdom of God...**
    - **He has \_\_\_\_\_perfect\_\_\_\_\_knowledge.**
    - **He has \_\_\_\_\_eternal\_\_\_\_\_perspective.**
    - **He has \_\_\_\_\_infinite\_\_\_\_\_experience.**

#### Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read Job 28:12-28. What are the three facets of wisdom seen in this passage? 1) Knowledge – God alone knows where it dwells (v. 12, 23) 2) perspective – God views the ends of the earth (v. 24) 3) experience – God saw it, declared it, established it, and searched it out (v. 27)
- Invite a learner to share a situation when he/she said, “If I’d known that, I would have done things differently.” Lead the learners to see that our knowledge is incredibly limited, therefore we cannot rely on our knowledge to guide or comfort us in the midst of suffering.
- Invite a learner to share a time when they learned how to do something by making a mistake. Lead the learners to see that our experience is limited and can lead us to a wrong view of suffering.
- If you did not discuss this in the beginning, ask someone to share a time when someone asked them why God has allowed them to go through the suffering that they are experiencing. Explain to the learners that their failure to know the answer to the question “Why?” demonstrates our limited knowledge, perspective and experience.
- Read Job 28:23-24 again. What does Job say about God’s knowledge, perspective, and experience? (Explain to the learners that because God’s knowledge, perspective, and experience are perfect, He always does what is best, therefore we need to trust Him with our lives in the midst of suffering.)
- Invite a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. What does the gospel say about our wisdom and God’s wisdom?

#### Application . . .

- Why do we fail sometimes to believe that the suffering we encounter is the best thing for us at that time?
- If we understand that God’s knowledge, perspective and experience are perfect, what would keep us from trusting Him when we suffer?

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- In the depth of our despair, God is our                   hope                  .
  - He will heal our                   bodies                  .
  - We will see His                   face                  .

#### Discussion Questions

- Enlist 2 volunteers to read Job 6:8-10 and 7:13-16. Remind the learners that Job is in complete despair.
- Read Job 19:23-27. What is the turning point in this passage? (Lead the learners to see that Job found hope knowing that he had a Redeemer (v. 25) and that this life was not the end (v. 26).)
- Enlist a volunteer to read Romans 8:18-23. According to Paul, what is the proper perspective of suffering? (Lead the learners to see that like Job, Paul found hope in suffering knowing that what is to come is greater than anything that we experience in the present.)

#### Application . . .

- David said that our glimpse of the face of God is strongest, clearest, and most powerful from the depth of our despair. Why do you think this is true?
- David said that a “cancer survivor” is not someone who has lived through cancer, but someone who has found hope in God in the midst of cancer. How can this be true for every instance of suffering in our life? (Victory does not come from making it through a difficult situation, but from finding hope in God in the midst of a difficult situation). Invite someone to apply this to their personal experience and share their thoughts with the group.
- Read Revelation 22:1-5. Explain that in the end, the curse of sin will be broken and we will see His face. All suffering will be done away with. God is our ultimate hope!

End your time by praying as a group for any of the participants who are in the midst of suffering, for those in our Community of Faith who are suffering, and for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world who may be suffering. If you have a large group (10 or more) divide up into groups of 3 or 4 to pray.