



The Life of Job

The topic of suffering poses some the deepest questions human beings struggle with. Why is there suffering? Why does God allow it? Does the fact that we suffer mean there is no God? Or, that He is not good?

When pain comes our way, we are not prepared; it takes us by surprise because we expected (even thought we were entitled to) an easy life. In the midst of our pain, we are impatient, looking for a quick fix. Seeking escape, we anesthetize ourselves. When pain comes to others, we have no idea how to help, so we isolate and avoid them, or add insult to their injury with meaningless platitudes.

Where do we find wisdom to help us make sense of suffering? What does the Bible have to say on the subject? Should Christ-followers expect a life that is free from suffering? Isn't it God's job to protect us from pain? The story of Job offers an unexpected perspective.

Week Four: "Why?"—Unhelpful Paths

Text: Job 4-5

Discussion Questions:

The following are based on the "My Application" Questions found in the bulletin this week. (Leader urge your group members to attend worship—or watch the sermon

online—and to spend time considering and answering those questions before coming to the group. This will produce a richer discussion time.)

- Do you tend to look at life events in life through the lens of cause and effect or random chance? How does this play out for you when you are suffering?
- Job is disappointed with his friends trying to correct (fix) his thinking. See Job 6:14-23. Have you ever experienced people who try to fix you when you are hurting? Have you ever tried to be the fixer?
- Job's friends saw only health and prosperity as the markers of a life blessed by God. (Job 5:17-26.) What is the problem of expecting God to provide you with only good? (Job 2:7-10.)
- The Bible explains suffering as purposeful AND mysterious. Is that explanation comforting when you are the one suffering? Why?

Prayer:

The best comfort comes from God Himself (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Human beings comfort each other best by extending His comfort rather than our own “words of wisdom.” Perhaps some group members are feeling convicted about past attempts to “comfort” a suffering person in ways that were unhelpful. Others may feel resentment over a time a well-meaning friend made them feel worse by offering unhelpful words of “comfort.” Both can take those feelings to God:

- Ask God to forgive the times you believe you missed the mark. Ask Him to show you how you can better comfort people in the future.
- Ask God to give you compassion for the person who hurt you, and choose to forgive. Receive the comfort Jesus offers, and ask Him to prepare you to be someone who extends His comfort to others in turn.

Application:

Look for opportunities to be intentional in the lives of suffering people around you. Some of those people may be far from God. This is a perfect opportunity to BLESS them. Be prepared to tell the group what happened.

Scripture Memory:

Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4