

WEEK 3: HOW COULD A GOOD GOD ALLOW SUFFERING?

ABOUT THIS SERIES

As we start the new year, join St. Mark on Sunday mornings for conversations on faith and doubt in our series *Reason for God*. Together, we'll take on some of the common questions people have about faith and Christianity.

ITEMS NEEDED

Bibles

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray for your group | <input type="checkbox"/> Read through the Discussion Guide | <input type="checkbox"/> Refreshments (optional) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean meeting area | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean bathroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Crack front door |

OPENING (5 MIN)

After a general welcome, say: Let's get started this morning with a quick icebreaker—

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE LIONS FANS—WHY ARE YOU STILL A FAN AFTER YEARS OF SUFFERING?

After a brief discussion, say: We can joke around about suffering, but the truth is, suffering is something very real and very painful for all of us. And when we suffer, we eventually look to God and ask the question we're going to discuss today as we continue our series *The Reason for God*: How could a good God allow suffering?

It's a good question, and one worth praying about. So, before we get started, will you please pray with me?

OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

Host, lead the group in prayer.

YOUR SUFFERING (APX. 10-15 MIN)

After a prayer, say: Before we dig into God's Word together, let's personalize this a bit—

IF YOU'RE COMFORTABLE SHARING, WHAT IS THE MOST RECENT SUFFERING YOU'VE ENDURED?

After a discussion, say: Author C.S. Lewis famously wrote in his book *The Problem of Pain*, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

WHAT DO YOU THINK SUFFERING MAKES US THINK OF GOD?

WHICH ONE OF THESE FOUR THINGS DO YOU THINK SUFFERING MAKES PEOPLE MOST-OFTEN QUESTION: GOD'S EXISTENCE, GOD'S POWER, GOD'S PLAN, OR GOD'S GOODNESS? WHY?

YOUR SUFFERING (APX. 10-15 MIN)

After a discussion, say: In Sunday's sermon we heard how sin is the source of all suffering. Sin is what causes tsunamis and brain tumors and theft. Which leaves God with a few choices: One, he could wipe out everything that causes suffering, including sinners like you and me. Two, he could ignore our suffering and do nothing about it. Thank "goodness", he chose a third option, and his answer to our suffering was to enter it.

CAN SOMEONE READ ISAIAH 53:4-6 ALOUD FOR US?

HOW DOES THESE WORDS CHANGE THE WAY YOU VIEW SUFFERING?

NO SUFFERING (5 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Because of the cross of Jesus, our sins are paid for and we can enter a sinless paradise. Revelation 21:4 tells us that one day,

"God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

HOW DOES THESE WORDS CHANGE THE WAY YOU VIEW SUFFERING?

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRAYER (5 – 7 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Before we get to our prayers, two announcements.

One, Prosper the City is going to be coming up after Easter, so just prepare your calendars now for some more Small Group meetings in late April and May.

Two, every Small Group is going to sponsor one of the prayerwalks this summer. We'll help plan routes, plan Scripture, and bring refreshments for our particular week. So be looking at which of your Wednesday evenings this summer would be good for that.

Let's close things out with prayer—

ARE THERE ANY PRAYER REQUESTS TODAY?

Host, begin with a prayer asking God to help us lead with the resurrection. Then, pray for the prayer requests.