HOW COULD A GOOD GOD ALLOW EVIL AND SUFFERING?

SERIES BIG IDEA
Even when facing big questions that don’t have easy answers, we can find solid reasons to move forward in faith, believing that the message of Christianity is true.

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.

OPENING QUESTIONS
1. Share one thing that happened today that you are grateful for.

CULTURAL SUPPRESSION OF PAIN
Culturally we do everything we can to avoid facing the reality of suffering. We do this through distractions, addictions, denial, or naïve optimism.

2. How have you employed these modes of avoidance in your own life?

3. How has COVID-19 revealed the discomfort of suffering?

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL
A recent poll asked Americans “if you could ask God any question what would it be?” The most common question was this: Why would a good God allow evil and suffering? This question has become known as the problem of evil where we struggle with two things about God:

A. If God’s GOOD, he would end suffering, but suffering still exists. Thus, God is able to end suffering, but not willing, therefore He is not good.

B. If God COULD, He would end suffering, but suffering still exists. Thus, God is willing to end suffering, but not able, therefore he is not God.

3. In what ways have you wrestled with this question of suffering in our world?

4. Has anyone ever asked you this question of “Why would a good God allow evil and suffering to happen?” What were the circumstances? How did you respond?

5. How has the COVID-19 Pandemic caused you to ask this question?

THE GOD WHO SUFFERS
Suffering is a reality that every single person will encounter in their life. Whether it is the loss of a loved one, a financial crisis, a divorce, a miscarriage, or living through a global pandemic like the one we are in. Suffering is a reality that no one goes through life without. The Bible is not aloof to this reality. Suffering lines the pages of the Bible. The most extreme account of suffering we have in the Bible is in the gospel writer Matthew’s account of the crucifixion.

READ MATTHEW 27:22-54

6. What words or phrases stand out to you from this passage? Why?
7. How does knowing that God suffers change how you view him? How does that change how you view your own suffering and the suffering of the world?

GOD SUFFERS WITH US
*In all their suffering, God also suffered.* (Isaiah 63:9)

8. In what ways can we find comfort in the truth that God not only suffers for us, but also with us?

CHARACTER TRANSFORMATION THROUGH SUFFERING
*Even though Jesus was God’s Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.* (Hebrews 5:8)

9. Think back to a time of suffering. How has that experience changed your life?

10. How do you hope God changes you through the suffering of this pandemic?

MICRO GROUP
Get into smaller micro-groups of 3 or 4 for the remainder of this discussion guide. Micro groups should be same sex – all men or all women. Keep these same micro groups throughout this series.

H2O – Habits to Outcome
Spiritual habits (Bible engagement, prayer, accountability, journaling, and serving) lead to the outcomes of Character Transformation* and Calling Activation*. In this series we will focus on the habit of Journaling.

Last week we read through Ephesians 6 and journaled something God was saying to us.

11. Share what you journaled with the group.

12. What was your biggest takeaway from the book of Ephesians?

This week we will:
This week journal out what questions you have about why suffering happens. Take those questions to God in prayer asking him to deepen your trust of him and talk them through with a friend or spouse.

Close your micro group by praying for each other.

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*Character Transformation* means that your character is demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit as you become more like Jesus. (Galatians 5:22-23)

*Calling Activation* means that you are living out your primary calling as a disciple maker. (Matthew 28:19-20)