

THE 7 BIG QUESTIONS DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

3

Session Three: **Why Does God Allow Pain and Suffering?**

Social Time

Take ten minutes for the group to catch up and reconnect over snacks and refreshments. Then, after gathering everyone into a comfortable circle, share something like the following Introduction.

Introduction

Why does God allow pain and suffering? This is a very common question and is possibly the most difficult to answer. It is undoubtedly one of the most significant obstacles for many people who are questioning whether God exists or whether they should trust him. So if this has been a hard question for you, know that you're not alone. Watch what others say in the first video, *Pulse of the World on Pain & Suffering*.

Video 1: *Pulse of the World on Pain & Suffering*

This video is a 2.5-minute survey of many people's responses to this question.

Questions for Discussion

- Did you identify with anyone's expressed views in the film? If so, who and what resonated with you?
- Was it surprising to learn that the top question people would ask God is, "Why is there pain and suffering in the world?" What would be some of the questions you'd ask God?

Video 2: *The Curiosity Collective: Why Does God Allow Pain and Suffering?*

This is a 10-minute collection of subject matter experts discussing the question "Why does God allow pain and suffering?" It displays the various questions, struggles, and perspectives of these individuals regarding this week's topic. See what they have to say and discuss it.

Questions for Discussion

After watching the video, choose from this list of questions or ask some of your own to facilitate discussion. There's no need to limit your discussion to these questions or to feel pressured to cover all of them in the time you have.

- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in *The Curiosity Collective*? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult is it for you to reconcile the existence of both suffering and God (1 = easy; 10 = impossible)? Why?
- One of the *Pulse* speakers noted, "Some of the best lessons I've learned in life . . . came from very painful times." In what ways might good come from bad? Do you have any experience with this?
- If there's a God, why do you think he allows evil in the world?
- In the video, what did you think of James's suggestion that God "understands our suffering . . . [and] is seeking to heal it"?

Wrap-Up

Thoughts to Share with the Group

The Problem of Evil states that an all-powerful and perfectly good God would not allow evil to exist in the world. Responses to this argument vary within Christianity and other faiths. Maybe it's a test of our faith. Or perhaps God is simply unable to change our circumstances.

Romans 8:18 says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." In this passage, the Apostle Paul suggests that something good always comes of something bad. Indeed, a few verses later he affirms that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him." Scripture proposes that, despite the painful circumstances in which we often find ourselves, God can somehow use them for his and our good.

Follow-Up Resources

As you wrap up this session, share or summarize these bullets:

- Acknowledge that with a topic as big as this, there is no way to answer the question comprehensively.
- Inform the group that you'll be sending some follow-up resources so people can continue to explore God.
- Thank people for joining the discussion, and invite them to stick around if they want to continue the conversation.

Explore More on Pain and Suffering

The following resources are designed for deeper exploration of the topic of pain and suffering. If you are doing this series offline, you can e-mail these resources to your group after the session. Simply copy this section and paste it into an e-mail.

Videos

- What Is the Reason for Suffering?
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/what-is-the-reason-for-suffering-video>)
- What Is God's Role in Pain and Suffering?
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/what-is-gods-role-in-pain-and-suffering-video>)

Articles

- Does God Cause Suffering?
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/does-god-cause-suffering>)
- Does God Care When I Hurt?
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/does-god-care-when-i-hurt>)

Daily Stream of Inspiration

- Insights on Coping with Pain and Suffering
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/insights-on-coping-with-pain-and-suffering>)

White Paper

- A Deeper Look at What the Bible Says about Pain and Suffering
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/what-the-bible-says-about-pain-and-suffering-paper>)

Recommended Books

- *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis
(<http://amzn.to/182ftBE>)
- *Evil and the Justice of God*, N. T. Wright
(<http://amzn.to/1dkGk23>)

Additional Content on Pain and Suffering

- "Pain and Suffering," Explore God
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/pain-and-suffering>)

Scripture Focus

In Romans 8:18, Paul says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

In what ways might your pain and suffering reveal something good and beautiful in the world one day? If you keep a journal, take some time to note your responses there.