

“Where was God?”

Learning to trust God when he allows suffering.

*Based on “Blindsided by God” by Peter Chin, Christianity Today,
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INTRODUCTION

In light of the events that took place in Las Vegas on October 1st, this study is designed to allow discussion of the questions we may face whenever there is a tragedy. “Where was God when this happened?” This is a common question whenever natural disasters or acts of violence occur. As believers we want to offer the world hope, but we sometimes wrestle with the same questions ourselves. Your group should be a safe place to discuss how you have been affected by recent events, how you can respond to others and to support one another in prayer.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

Have you personally experienced a natural disaster or other tragedy?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

We aren’t promised a pain-free life.

Q1. Read John 14:1, 27; James 1:2-4

To avoid despair when suffering hits us, we’ve got to prepare our minds for it before it hits and remind ourselves of the truth when we’re in the middle of it. What did Jesus share with us to counter the impact of the tribulation we certainly will face in life? (John 14:1, 27) What are some potential purposes for suffering in the Christian life (James 1:2-4)? How can we apply these verses to help us keep suffering from distorting our image of God as a loving father?

God promises not to leave us alone in suffering.

Q2. Read Hebrews 13:5; Ps. 23:4; Ps. 46:1; Ps. 22:2

In the midst of our suffering we are not alone. God has promised never to leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). He walks beside us when we pass through the darkest valley (Ps. 23:4). He is ever present in our time of need (Ps. 46:1). In Psalm 22:2 David struggled to sense God’s presence. Share with your group a time when you felt God’s presence during your suffering as well as any time you struggled to sense His presence.

God often uses others to bring us comfort and encouragement in the midst of our troubles (1 Thess. 5:11, Rom. 12:15, Heb. 10:19–25). Many times, it takes an experience of suffering to draw out and bond together the body of Christ. How have people comforted and encouraged you in the midst of a difficult time?

God turns suffering into glory.

Q3. Read Romans 5:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:6–7; John 9:3

God never wastes a drop of our suffering. Among other things, suffering can confirm our hope of salvation (Rom. 5:3–5), build endurance in us that leads to maturity, prove our faith to be genuine and pure as gold (1 Pet. 1:6–7), and ultimately lead to perfecting us. God himself is glorified when he redeems our suffering. (John 9:3)

Many people in our society place their hope and trust only in things they can experience with their five senses. Why should Christians be different? How does a deferred, invisible promise give us consolation in our present, tangible sufferings?

Wrap-Up

At times, we can have an unconscious expectation that if we follow God, we should be blessed and sheltered from suffering. When our experiences don’t reflect this expectation, we can feel like God has betrayed us. But God doesn’t play by our rules. In fact, he often uses our disappointments and trials to build the character of Christ in us. God is not content to leave us where we are. He is present in the midst of our suffering and he is always at work transforming our suffering into various shades and degrees of glory. So we look to God’s word for the truth that whatever our circumstances we can affirm whatever God does and allows, is good even when it involves momentary seasons of suffering.

Memory Verse

“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”

John 14:27 NLT

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life:

Challenge: *Write encouraging notes to people in the hospital or confined to their homes, include some encouraging Scripture passages and perhaps some personal reflections on how they helped you get through your own suffering.*

