

## Small Group Guide

# SIN, SUFFERING, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*February 16, 2014*

*Genesis 50:20*

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

## GETTING STARTED

### *Before Small Group*

#### **Readings for February 17-23**

Genesis 50 & Exodus 1-6

Luke 3-9

#### *Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (Genesis)*

**Background of Exodus:** The title “exodus” comes from the Greek word meaning “going out” or “departure” and describes the major event that occurs in the book. Exodus opens where Genesis leaves off – the descendants of Abraham are living in Egypt instead of in the Promised Land. The events in Exodus occur approximately four hundred years after Jacob’s family moved to Egypt, and as prophesied in Genesis 15, Abraham’s descendants became slaves. While Genesis highlights God as Creator, Exodus focuses on God as the Deliverer of His people, for He keeps His promise to free His people and to bring them back to the land of promise.

#### **Structure of Exodus:**

- Exodus 1-18 focuses on the deliverance of the people Israel from Egypt and God’s provision for His people.
- Exodus 18-24 explains God’s covenant with Israel.
- Exodus 25-31 provides instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle and explanation for the priestly role.
- Exodus 32-34 describes God’s response to His people’s idolatry.
- Exodus 35-40

**This Week in the Old Testament:** Exodus 1 gives an overview of the nation of Israel in the 400 years or so between Joseph’s death and Moses’ birth. The people of Israel became numerous, and because of this, Pharaoh enslaved them and even began to regulate the Israelite population through murdering their male children. However, Pharaoh’s actions could not thwart God’s plan to deliver His people, and Exodus 2 introduces the man whom God would use to lead His people out of slavery. Exodus 1-2 also depict two groups of people who trusted God: the midwives whose fear of God was greater than their fear of man (even a man as powerful as Pharaoh) and Moses’ mother who trusted God to take care of her son when she placed him in the basket on the Nile. Acts 7:23-29 indicates that Moses had some understanding that God would use him in a special way, but when watching an unjust situation occur (Ex. 2:11-22), Moses took matters into his own hands and had to flee to Midian as a result.

Through the burning bush in Exodus 3, God calls Moses to lead the Israelites, and because of Moses’ insecurity, he tries to decline. He brings up his inadequacy (Ex. 3:11), his ineffectiveness (Ex. 4:1), and his

## Small Group Guide

# SIN, SUFFERING, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

February 16, 2014

Genesis 50:20

---

incompetence (Ex. 4:10), but God instructs him to go and promises His presence and His power. In Exodus 4, God gives Moses two demonstrations of power to prove to the Israelites and to the Egyptians that God had sent him – the snake and the leprosy. Serpents were sacred in Egypt, and by transforming a staff into a snake then by having Moses' snake consume the snakes of Pharaoh's magicians, God demonstrates control over the spiritual powers and forces of Egypt. Through the sign of leprosy, God displays His power over illness, health, and life.

God informed Moses in advance that Pharaoh would “harden his heart” and refuse to release the Israelites (Ex. 4:21-23), but Pharaoh's stubbornness led to a greater demonstration of God's power and glory. Ten times in Exodus 4-14, *Yahweh* is the subject who hardens Pharaoh's heart, but these same chapters also include ten references to *Pharaoh* hardening *his* own heart. Man's responsibility and God's sovereignty both are at work in this story.

### *Where We Are In The Story ~ New Testament (Matthew)*

**Background of Luke:** In Luke 1: 1-4, Luke explains why he wrote this book – for his friend Theophilus (and for us) to have certainty regarding the identity of Jesus and the beliefs that Christ-followers commit themselves to. While Matthew focuses on Jesus as the Promised Messiah and Mark emphasizes that He is the Son of God, Luke depicts Jesus as Savior.

**This Week in the New Testament:** Unlike the other Gospels, Luke delves more into the birth and life of John the Baptist, and he does so to demonstrate the fulfillment of God's promises with regards to the Messiah and to the Messiah's forerunner. In Luke 4:16-30, Jesus claims to fulfill the role promised in Isaiah 61, and Luke 4-9 provides snapshots of Jesus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecies on a small scale through healing the sick and liberating those who were demon-possessed. Luke 4-9 also describes the opposition Jesus faced in His earthly ministry from people in His hometown (Lk. 4:16-30) and from the scribes and Pharisees (Lk. 5:17-6:11). But throughout the Gospel, Luke describes the triumph of God over the opposition of people and demons, for nothing can hinder His purpose and plan. Luke 6:20-49 also contains a shorter version of Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 4-7), and Luke's version is often called the “Sermon on the Plain.”

### *During Small Group*

**Welcome** – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

**Looking Back** – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

**Looking Up** – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

## Small Group Guide

# SIN, SUFFERING, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

February 16, 2014

Genesis 50:20

### Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives:* Praise God for His sovereignty in the joys and hardships of life. Ask God to help us rightly understand His goodness to us, even in circumstances that we might not welcome. Pray for us all to accept the responsibility we have in how we react to all of life's circumstances. Pray our daily lives will constantly and consistently reflect our joyful dependence on the Lord. Ask God to continually develop our trust in Him to guide us through every aspect and situation of our lives. Praise Him for the hope we have in knowing He sovereignly controls all things.
- *Pray for Our City:* This week we are praying for foster care in our faith family and our surrounding community. To be involved in this ministry or to find out more information, visit [brookhills.org/careforchildren](http://brookhills.org/careforchildren). We are also praying for Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, Pratt City, and Q.E. Hammonds, Pastor.
- *Pray for Our World:* This week, we are praying for Brook Hills Mid-Termers, Phillip and Stacie P. as they serve with their four children in East Asia. Phillip and Stacie's family have been in East Asia almost a year and are working and living in a city to share the gospel and make disciples among an unreached people group. We are also praying for the Uyghur peoples of China. For more information and ways to pray, visit [brookhills.org/weeklyresources](http://brookhills.org/weeklyresources).

## MAIN TRUTH

### Message Outline

#### SIN, SUFFERING, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Genesis 50:20

#### The Many Faces of Joseph...

- The favorite son.
- The despised brother.
- The slave in a foreign land.
- The pure servant.
- The slandered prisoner.
- The leader over all the land.
- The restorative brother.
- The reunited son.

#### The Many Facets of God...

- He is the ever-present Lord.
- He is the ever-subtle King.
  - Unexplainable friends...
    - Divine sovereignty.
    - Human responsibility.

## Small Group Guide

# SIN, SUFFERING, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

February 16, 2014

Genesis 50:20

---

- The ultimate conclusion...
  - The responsibility of man cannot be ignored.
  - The will of God cannot be thwarted.
- He is the ever-faithful Savior.
  - God keeps His promises.
  - God preserves His people.

### The Mammoth Foundations for Us...

- We have a Lord who is with us.
  - He is with you in your highs.
  - He is with you in your lows.
- We have a King who is guiding us.
  - God is not overlooking some of the details in your life.
  - God is orchestrating all of the details in your life.
    - He is orchestrating a variety of circumstances...
    - ...in a variety of people...
    - ...for a variety of goals.
  - God's providence is the only foundation for embracing life's pain.
    - God takes evil and turns it into good.
    - God takes suffering and turns it into satisfaction.
- We have a Savior who has redeemed us.
  - Don't miss the parallels...
    - God uses a dreadful sin to save His people in Genesis.
    - God uses a dreadful sin to save His people for all eternity.
    - In both stories, God takes the sins of the destroyers and makes them the means of their deliverance.
  - Don't miss the promise...
    - God will take the Lion of Judah and make him the Lamb who was slain.
  - Don't miss the point...
    - The purpose of the story of Joseph is to point us to the supremacy of Jesus.
    - The One who saved us from our sins will one day glorify us with Him.

### Message Summary

Suffering occurs as a result of sin in the world, and the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50 demonstrates who God is and how He works in a world of sin and suffering. Although Joseph experienced the hatred of his brothers, slavery in a foreign land, and imprisonment when he had acted righteously, God remained present with him. In the middle of Joseph's suffering, God oversaw everything that happened in his life, and the evil done to Joseph could not thwart God's plan to protect Joseph, to keep His promises, and to provide for Joseph's family. In the midst of sin and suffering, we can know that God has not overlooked any of the details of our lives but orchestrates a variety of circumstances in a variety of people for a variety of goals; furthermore, God is always with us, He is always guiding us, and He has redeemed us.

## WHY IT MATTERS

### Digging Deeper

As the leader, there are at least three directions the small group can take in light of the current Bible reading plan. Knowing the people in the group, prayerfully consider what would be the best route to help those in your group grow. The group's meetings could also vary with each week, so if one week's sermon prompts a lot of

## Small Group Guide

# SIN, SUFFERING, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*February 16, 2014*

*Genesis 50:20*

---

thought and discussion, option one could be what the group does that week while the next week could be different. As the leader, feel the freedom to take all or just some of the content in this guide and do what is best for your group.

- Using the discussion questions below, the small group time can focus on discussing the sermon and how to apply it.
- The group can discuss the Bible readings from the past week. If choosing this route, ensure that the group does not simply discuss information but also focuses on how to apply what they have learned from the Bible readings. The information in the “Where We Are in the Story” section can assist the leader in knowing the background and context for the readings.
- Using the REAP (read, examine, apply, pray) outline for studying Scripture, the group can take one or both passages from that day’s readings and discuss them. So if the group meets on Monday, then you could pick one or both of the passages for Monday. This also helps those who are new to studying the Bible or who struggle with reading it learn how to do so. To assist the group with REAP questions, download the Guide to Personal Worship from [brookhills.org](http://brookhills.org).

In light of this sermon topic, there are potentially three different types of people in your group: those who are not Christians, those who are Christ-followers and *are* in the midst of a trial, and those who are Christ-followers and who *will* experience suffering. With this in mind, what is the makeup of your group?

As the leader, are you aware of any current needs in your small group? Are any of your members currently walking through a trial – marriage troubles, illness, caretaker for a parent, prodigal child, broken relationship, etc.? How are the members of your group coming alongside each other to encourage and pray as well as to physically help each other? Is the group set up in such a way that members feel able to share about such things in their lives? If not, how can the group cultivate such an environment? Depending on the group, consider foregoing the curriculum for this small group meeting and, instead, spend the entire time in prayer for each other and in praising God for Who He is.

Genesis 50:20, which is the thesis of the entire book of Genesis, states that God used what man intended for evil and turned it into good. While we may not always see the big picture of why God allows certain things to happen or how He uses it, He does often give us glimpses. Would anyone in the group be willing to briefly share about a season of suffering and how they have seen purpose in that situation and how God used that season either in small or big ways? Such testimonies should direct us to praise God for His power and His wisdom, so use these testimonies to praise God for His character.

The truths presented in the story of Joseph and in this sermon should equip us to face trials with faith and obedience. But practically, what does this look like? How does knowledge of God’s character enable us to face tough times with faith and obedience? Ask the group to share what has helped them to trust God in the midst of suffering. How can God use these seasons to grow our relationship with Him? What prevents these seasons from being times of growth?

## **NOW WHAT DO WE DO?**

### *Group Discussion & Application*

*Use the following questions to help review the application of God’s Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).*

- When bad things happen, many people often respond by asking the question why. “Why has this happened? Why is this happening to *me*?” Why do we ask these questions? Particularly, why would a Christ-follower ask these questions?

## Small Group Guide

# SIN, SUFFERING, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

February 16, 2014

Genesis 50:20

---

- What misconceptions do many people – including people in the church - have about suffering and God’s character? What is the basis of those misconceptions?
- Why does God allow suffering and evil to occur in the world? How can God be good and still allow these things to occur? How can we respond when an *unbeliever* asks these questions? How can we respond when a *believer* asks these questions?
- What does Genesis 39 teach us about how to respond to sexual temptation? When tempted by Potiphar’s wife, Joseph asked, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” How can we cultivate a mentality that responds to temptation in such a faithful way?
- Although Joseph’s brothers hated him and sold him into slavery, how did Joseph respond to them when they reconnected years later? How do we respond to those who hurt us? How should we respond? How do we forgive those who hurt us? While we should forgive, should our relationship with the person change in light of what they have done to hurt us? If so, how? What does the Bible teach?
- How have you responded in times of suffering in your life? What does our response to suffering express about who we believe God to be? If I respond with bitterness and anger, what does that express about my view of God? If I respond with doubt, depression, or by becoming withdrawn, what does that express about my view of God? If I respond with anxiety or fear, what does that express about my view of God? If I respond with peace, what does that express about my view of God?
- How can we respond with faith in times of suffering? What does it look like for a believer to be faithful in the face of a trial?
- Genesis 36-50 portrays God as ever-present, ever-subtle, and ever-faithful. What does it look like to go through a trial and to believe these truths about the character of God?
- What promises of God can we cling to during trials? What truths about Him and about our situation do we need to remember in seasons of suffering?
- Why is God’s sovereignty a good thing, even if the situation does not work out the way that you would like?
- While we cannot fully comprehend how God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility work together, how would you explain these two with regards to human suffering?
- Genesis demonstrates how God takes evil and turns it into good. Why should this truth keep God’s people from living with a victim mentality, despite the suffering they have experienced?
- How does God take suffering and turn it into satisfaction? What does it mean to find satisfaction in Christ? How do we do this?
- In what ways does God use suffering to sanctify His people?