

Message Discussion Guide

THE GOSPEL, GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY, AND SUFFERING

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

August 10, 2008

Job 1, 2

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Invite learners to share a time when they experienced the death of someone close to them. Then ask the following questions:

- What kind of comments did people say to you about his/her death?
- How did these comments make you feel? Did any of them make you angry, sad, or at peace?
- What do these comments reveal about the speaker's theology of God and/or suffering?

Explain that today we'll discuss suffering and how our view of God's sovereignty affects how we deal with suffering.

Option 2

Invite learners to describe what they think of when they hear the word "sovereignty." Ask the following questions:

- Do you think that God is sovereign? Why or why not?
- What does the Bible indicate about God's sovereignty?
- How does God's sovereignty affect your life?
- How does God's sovereignty affect how you view suffering?

Explain that today we'll discuss suffering and how our view of God's sovereignty affects how we deal with suffering.

Review the Message . . .

The Suffering of Job . . .

- Suffering is often undeserved.
- Suffering is often unexpected.
- Suffering is often unimaginable.
- Suffering is always painful.

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer or several volunteers to read Job 1-2:1-10. Focusing on Job 1:1, 8 and 2:3
- What words are used to describe Job? What do these descriptions indicate about Job's relationship with God?
- What does the author of the book indicate that Job did to deserve this suffering?

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- Looking at Job 1:13, what was Job doing when this great calamity came? Based on his life up to that point and his intimate relationship with God, should Job have expected that suffering was coming quickly?
- Invite a volunteer to read Job 1:14-19 again. Describe the progression of the news of destruction that Job received from the servants.
- Read Job 1:20-21. Explain that Job's actions were signs of great grief and mourning. What do these actions indicate about Job's emotions regarding his losses?
- Did Job's response of worship to God surprise you? Did it minimize his pain? What does Job's response of worship indicate about his belief in God?

Application . . .

- Are there circumstances where suffering is the result of our own or someone else's sin? Do these circumstances make the suffering any less painful or easier?
- If suffering can occur in ways that seem unjust, can we live "good enough" lives to avoid suffering? What does that indicate about the role of suffering in our lives?
- How do you think Job felt after receiving the news from all of these servants? Try to imagine yourself in the same situation, how would you have felt after hearing such incredibly devastating news?
- Do we minimize the pain in suffering by offering trite clichés to others during times of grief and suffering?
- How do we minimize God's compassion for us when we ignore the pain of suffering?
- Can we worship God through our suffering by our expressions of pain? How?

The Sovereignty of God . . .

- **God is sovereign over angels.**
- **God is sovereign over demons.**
- **God is sovereign over nations.**
- **God is sovereign over nature.**
- **God is sovereign over disease.**
- **God is sovereign over death.**
- **God is sovereign over comfort.**
- **God is sovereign over calamity.**

Discussion Questions

- Explain that sovereign means "to have ruling authority." In Job 1:21, Job credits God with all authority in his life, for good and bad. How did Job's confidence in God's sovereignty lead Job to worship God?
- Looking at Job 1-2:1-10, encourage learners to list the actions that Satan had to ask God for permission to carry out. What does God's role in giving permission for these actions indicate about His control over what happened to Job and how these calamities were carried out? (*God was in control over the events of Job's life such*

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as disease, death, calamity and what means this calamity came to happen—nations and nature).

- What does Satan's required permission from God indicate about God's control over demons, including Satan?

Application . . .

- Knowing that God is sovereign over all things, how can the presence of suffering witness to His goodness? To His compassion?
- How can we have peace in the sovereignty of God when we know that suffering can occur at any moment and with great pain?
- What does God's sovereignty indicate about His power in the world and about His relationship with His people?

The Gospel, God's Sovereignty, and Suffering . . .

- **God's sovereign design for our lives on this earth includes suffering.**
- **The sovereignty of God is the only foundation for praise in the middle of pain.**
 - **His sovereignty assures us that God is in control.**
 - **At every moment in our suffering, God is with us.**
 - **At every moment in our suffering, God is for us.**
 - **His sovereignty reminds us that Satan has been conquered.**
 - **His sovereignty guarantees us that one day our suffering will conclude.**
- **Ultimately, our pain on this earth can only be understood rightly from the sovereign perspective of heaven.**

Discussion Questions

- Job initially responds to his suffering in Job 1:21. To whom does Job give credit for his suffering?
- Enlist two volunteers to read Isaiah 53:10-11 and John 10:18. According to these verses, was Jesus' suffering designed by God or simply allowed by God?
- Was Job aware of the drama that was unfolding in heaven between God and Satan?
- Did Job's lack of knowledge of God's perspective on his suffering change his response? Why not?

Application . . .

- How does it make us feel knowing that God designs suffering in our lives? Does it make us question God's character? How?
- How can we synthesize God's goodness and compassion with His design of suffering?
- Do we sometimes have the wrong idea that God is pleased, at worst, or complacent, at best, with our pain in suffering?
- How does His sovereignty in our lives witness to the truth that God is with us and for us?

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- How can we balance being honest in our suffering with God and not sin in our suffering?
- How can our confidence in God's Sovereignty and His victory over Satan, suffering, and death through Jesus Christ bring hope to our lives as we experience sin and suffering in this world?