

Message Discussion Guide THE GOSPEL, GOD'S PURPOSE, AND SUFFERING

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

August 24, 2008

Job 32-37

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 think about a time in their lives when someone told them what they needed to hear when they were suffering, and ask the following questions:

- What suffering were you going through and what did the person say to you? How did it make you feel at the time?
- How did it prove to be what you needed to hear?
- Did you think it was what you needed to hear at that time? If not, what led you to see that it was what you needed to hear?
- How did it help you get through your time of suffering?

Set up the discussion by reviewing the context of the situation. Job's 3 friends have given him a bad assessment of the situation by saying that if Job was truly righteous, he would not be suffering. Elihu comes along and seemingly says the right thing concerning Job's situation. Some of this was hard for Job to hear, but there was a lot of wisdom in what Elihu said.

Option 2

Invite the learners to share a time when they went through suffering. Discuss the following questions:

- Have you gone through a time of suffering and in the end saw that it was for your best?
- How did this time of suffering help you to grow as a person and lead you closer to God?
- How does this affect the way that you go through suffering now?
- Do you ever still feel that your suffering is for nothing?

Lead the learners to see that suffering is a tool from God to draw us into a closer relationship with Him. It is like the refiner's fire which purifies gold and other precious metals. It is a necessary process to make the metal the best that it can be. Seeing that God has a purpose in suffering helps us to better understand why we suffer.

Review the Message . . .

Foundations...

- God has a purpose.
- God's purpose is sometimes different.
- God's purpose is always good.

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read Job 36:5. What does this verse tell us about God during our suffering? (God has a firm purpose for our suffering.)

Message Discussion Guide

THE GOSPEL, GOD'S PURPOSE, AND SUFFERING

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

August 24, 2008

Job 32-37

- Does knowing God has a purpose in our suffering help us to persevere?
- Invite someone to read Job 37:13. What does Elihu say about the purpose of the clouds? Since Elihu says this in the context of suffering, what does this say about why God brings suffering? (Help the learners to see that God's purpose for suffering can vary from situation to situation.)
- Read Job 37:23-24. What does Elihu say God's purpose in suffering? (Lead the learners to see that God's purpose is never oppressive, but righteous and just. Therefore, God's purposes are always good.)

Application . . .

- How does it help us as we encounter suffering to know that God has a purpose? Does it make our suffering any easier? Why or why not? (His purpose will be accomplished, giving us hope in our suffering.)
- Invite a learner to share a time when he/she has encountered suffering. Did you ever understand the purpose behind your suffering? What was that purpose? Did you ever question that God's purpose was good? How did you see that His purpose was good?
- Why is it difficult sometimes to know God's ultimate purpose in the midst of suffering?

The Purpose of God in Suffering...

- **God uses suffering to _____ refine _____ our faith.**

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read Job 33:16-20. What are the 5 purposes in suffering that Elihu mentions in v. 17-19?
- Enlist a volunteer to read Romans 5:3-5. What does Paul say that suffering produces? (perseverance) What does Paul say is the final result of going through suffering? (i.e. hope that does not disappoint)
- Enlist a volunteer to read James 1:2-4. What does James say here is the final result of suffering? (Lead the learners to see that James says that suffering produces the perseverance that is necessary to bring us to spiritual maturity.)
- Enlist a volunteer to read 1 Peter 1:6-7. What are the two reasons that Peter gives for the reason why we suffer? (i.e. so that our faith may prove genuine and so that our faith may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed).

Application . . .

- Why then do we need to go through the painful process of refinement? How is it worth it to go through this painful process?
 - It is not always easy to rejoice during suffering. What can lead us to rejoice in suffering? How can we rejoice?
- **God uses suffering to _____ reveal _____ His glory.**
 - **How God reveals Himself...**

Message Discussion Guide

THE GOSPEL, GOD'S PURPOSE, AND SUFFERING

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

August 24, 2008

Job 32-37

- In creation.
- In the Word.
- In our pain.
- What God reveals about Himself...
 - He is just.
 - He is merciful.
 - He is great.
- As we wrestle with God's revelation of Himself in suffering, we avoid these extremes...
 - Declaring our innocence.
 - Distrusting His justice.
 - Missing His mercy.
 - Minimizing His greatness.

Discussion Questions

- Read Job 33:12-16. What does this verse say about God's presence in suffering? (Help the learners to see that God is not only present in the midst of our suffering, but He is also revealing Himself during our time of suffering.)
- Enlist a volunteer to read Job 33:19-26. What does v. 26 say can be the result of going through pain? (i.e. favor with God, seeing God's face, shouts of joy, and being restored by God).
- Enlist a volunteer to read Job 34:10-22. What does this passage say about God in regard to evil? How can God be sovereign over everything, but in no way be responsible for the moral or natural evil in the world? (Lead the learners to see that God is sovereign, but man and Satan are responsible for the moral and natural evil in the world. It was Adam's sin in the garden that brought sin into the world, but it is God's redemptive plan that will rid all the moral and natural evil in the world.)
- Read Job 36:15-16. What characteristics of God do we see in this passage? (He is a deliverer, a comforter, a lover who woos, and He is gracious leading us to abundance, and to be free from restriction).
- Enlist a volunteer to read Job 33:8-13. Why is it misleading to ask the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" (Lead the learners to see that Job was a righteous man, yet he was far from innocent. There are none who are truly innocent and good.)

Application . . .

- What should our response be to God knowing that He reveals Himself in the midst of suffering?
- How can we turn pain into praise?
- C.S. Lewis said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." What can we do to see suffering as way to hear God and not just something that we have to go through in this life?

Message Discussion Guide

THE GOSPEL, GOD'S PURPOSE, AND SUFFERING

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

August 24, 2008

Job 32-37

- Considering that God is “wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction” (Job 36:16), how should we view God in light of suffering? What picture of God should we see from this knowledge?
- How can we respond to others when they ask us the question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

- **God uses suffering to teach us to rely on Him.**

Discussion Questions

- Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-9. What does Paul say is the purpose for the hardships in Asia?
- Enlist a volunteer to read Job 34:13-15. What are ways that God uses suffering to draw our attention to our reliance upon Him?

Application . . .

- Why do we rely more on doctors, medicines and treatments, statistics, others' opinions, etc. than we do on God when we suffer?
- How can suffering cause us to rely more on God and less on man?

- **God uses suffering to bring us to repent of and renounce all sin in our lives.**

Discussion Questions

- Read Job 36:17-21. Why do many people prefer to turn to evil instead of going through affliction?
- Read Job 33:18, 24 again. What is the purpose of suffering in these verses?
- Enlist a volunteer to read Genesis 3:17-19. What were the results of sin entering into the world? (both man and creation came under the curse of death).
- How can suffering remind us of the sin in our lives? (Lead the learners to see that suffering is a result of sin entering into the world. Situations of suffering may not be linked to a particular sin, but it should remind us of the presence of sin in our lives.)

Application . . .

- How can suffering lead us to repentance?
- How can this knowledge during suffering lead us to renounce all sin in our lives?
- What are ways that we can renounce the sin in our lives?

- **God uses suffering to lead us to our reward in Him.**

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read Isaiah 53:3-6. How has suffering cleansed us from all of our sin? (Jesus' suffering on the cross opened the door for our justification)

Message Discussion Guide

THE GOSPEL, GOD'S PURPOSE, AND SUFFERING

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

August 24, 2008

Job 32-37

- Ask the same volunteer to read Isaiah 53:7-11. What does v. 11 say is the result of His suffering? (He will see the light of life and be satisfied!).
- How can suffering lead us to ultimate satisfaction?

Application . . .

- How can suffering lead us to know God and treasure Him more?
- How can meditating on the cross give us a better perspective of suffering?
- J.I. Packer said, *“For it is often the case, as all the saints know, that fellowship with the Father and the Son is most vivid and sweet, and Christian joy is greatest, when the cross is heaviest.”* What are things that we can do that will help this become our experience during suffering?

Review the questions that David gave to consider when we walk through suffering. Encourage the learners to keep these questions in their Bibles or somewhere where they can have access to it in times of suffering. Encourage them to meditate on these questions when they go through suffering.

Questions to Consider When You Walk Through Suffering...

- **What areas of my faith is God refining through this suffering?**
- **What is God revealing about Himself through this suffering?**
- **How can I rely on God more as a result of my suffering?**
- **What sin(s) do I need to repent of and renounce as a result of my suffering?**
- **How can this suffering drive me to find deeper reward in God?**