

Why!?!?

When God doesn't make sense

The book of Job



Growth Group Discussion Questions

7. When it feels like all is lost

Read Job 31

1. *Looking over Job 29 and comparing it to Job's current experience, discuss how Job's suffering is exacerbated by a sense of loss. Looking at Job 29:1-5 what do you think Job misses the most?*
2. *What can we learn about the world and about ourselves from the fact that suffering carries a sense of loss? In what – perhaps to a much lesser degree – does everyone experience what Job experiences?*
3. “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” C. S. Lewis. **Discuss.**
4. *Looking over Job 31, how would you summarise Job's final plea? How does this make Job's case exceptional and different to our suffering?*
5. Putting it all together: Job was great and had everything. Job suffered an immense fall. However, Job is innocent and does not deserve what has happened to him. *Spend some time explaining how Job's case of Innocent Suffering points us to Someone else – the Ultimate Innocent Sufferer. Hint: see Philippians 2:9-11*
6. *So why did Jesus go through such underserved suffering?*
7. *How does Jesus' experience of suffering give us hope in our suffering? Hint: see Philippians 2:9-11 again and especially 2 Timothy 2:11-12 and NB Romans 8:16-17*

Leaders Notes

1. Job 29 is a long hard look at how good things used to be. This is what makes Job's suffering worse – he knows he has fallen. Had he never known God's blessing He would not be so miserable now. The idea that 'this is not what things should be like' is what makes suffering suffering. The 'wrongness' of suffering hurts the most. Sure, animals suffer, but they don't feel that it's 'wrong' like people do.
2. The very fact that we experience a sense of loss tells us that 'this is not the way things should be'. Now, we can either dismiss that as wishful thinking, or we can think: hey, maybe I was made for something better than this. Maybe something has gone wrong. This doesn't just happen when we suffer – although we experience it more clearly when we do suffer – this happens throughout life. The general experience of all people everywhere is that this life just doesn't satisfy. Something is missing. There's got to be more out there. We are all like Job – we have all lost something.
3. Up to the Growth Group. In this question I'm trying to get the group to see that it is reasonable to conclude, even from our experience of suffering, that there is another world. If there was no other world and if we were not fallen, we would still suffer like animals do, but we wouldn't experience it as loss. It would just be normal. Que sera, sera and all that nonsense...
4. Job's final plea is "I am innocent!" The implication of this is, "I don't deserve my suffering!" Now its true, we may not deserve the particular suffering we are going through, but not one of us is innocent. None of us has any claim in God. No one can say to God, 'I deserve better'. As someone once said (I have no idea who that could be), "Anything less than Hell is mercy."
5. Again, this gives Growth Group members a chance to practice articulating the gospel of Jesus Christ *in their own words*.
6. Substitution. Some folk have said that Jesus suffered *as an example* to us. This is true, Jesus is an excellent example of how to patiently endure suffering as the New Testament teaches us. But this is not the full story. We already have an example of patient suffering in Job. Jesus suffered because *He took our suffering*. He was our suffering. We deserve suffering and Jesus, the Only One who deserves no suffering, suffered bearing the punishment our sins deserve. It is not enough to say that Jesus is just our example. This does not save us, it still leaves us the job of saving ourselves by following His example. And no one can do that.
7. This is so important. This is why 'Jesus is our example' is true but not enough. Because we are united to Jesus by the Holy Spirit, what happened to Jesus will also happen to us. Jesus suffered for us, in our place. But then He was raised up to sit at the Father's right hand where He lives in glory. As the verses quoted above show, this will be our experience too. In fact the whole book of Revelation teaches this. If we patiently endure suffering on earth, we will reign with Him one day. This is our hope in suffering. Some place their hope on avoiding suffering. But to some extent or other suffering is unavoidable in this life. The only solid hope we have is that our Substitute suffered and if we patiently endure, what happened to Him will happen to us too. Perhaps end the whole study by praying through 1 Peter 4:19