

GOD QUESTIONS??

Questions about God and faith that matter.

Why does God allow suffering?

Series Overview

Does God really exist? If God is good, why is there suffering in the world? Can you trust what the Bible says? In this short series, we'll address these and similar questions so that we can have confidence in what we believe and be prepared to give an answer to those who are searching (1 Pet. 3:15).

Sermon Introduction

Here's the problem: if God is both all powerful and all-loving, why is there so much suffering in the world? Why doesn't he stop everything bad from happening? For some people, suffering is enough to convince them that God can't exist. But what Christianity offers is a perspective of life that is brutally honest—suffering is real and unavoidable—but also overwhelmingly hopeful for a future beyond imagination.

Passage: Romans 8:18-25, 31-39 (NIV)

Rom. 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Rom. 8:19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

Rom. 8:20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope

Rom. 8:21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Rom. 8:22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Rom. 8:23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Rom. 8:24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?

Rom. 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Rom. 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Rom. 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Rom. 8:33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

Rom. 8:34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Rom. 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

Rom. 8:36 As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

Rom. 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Rom. 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

Rom. 8:39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

1. Read the passage. What stood out to you? Was there anything that you found surprising or confusing?
2. Verses 20-23 describe suffering as an inescapable reality of the natural world. Which do you think is the more “normal” state of the world: painful or pain-free? Do you think most people expect to experience suffering in their lives? Why or why not?
3. One of the underlying reasons most people struggle with the reality of suffering is that it feels unjust, that it’s not how life *ought* to be. How does that sense—that suffering isn’t how the world should be—actually support belief in God, rather than argue against God’s existence?
4. Paul describes how we, along with creation, *groan* for relief from suffering (v. 23). Do you ever feel like you need to stifle your groans and pretend you’re more okay than you are? Why do you think most people try to hide suffering from other people?
5. Read vv. 31-39. Why do you think Paul is so “convinced” that nothing can separate him from God’s love? Do you have that level of hope and confidence today?
6. Romans 5:3-4 says: “We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Are there ways in

which you've become stronger, more resilient, even more hopeful, through suffering?

7. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, Paul writes: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows." Are there ways the suffering you've experienced might help you to comfort others?

Prayer

Often a position of submission helps us physically connect with the spiritual reality of meeting God. A posture of kneeling with open hands can demonstrate our willingness to submit to God's power.

- Pray for anyone you know who's going through a significant trial right now.
- If you're suffering, be honest with God. Tell him how it hurts, let him hear your groans, trusting that he is your Father in heaven who cares for you (cf. 1 Pet. 5:7).
- Ask God for the strength and perspective you need to persevere and grow through any suffering you're experiencing right now.
- Ask God to show you if there's someone you can give comfort to this week.