

## The Trouble with Christianity: Suffering Small Group Discussion Guide

THE GOAL: *To understand that the love of God transcends even our most acute experiences of pain and suffering.*

SUGGESTED ICEBREAKER<sup>[L][SEP]</sup> *The purpose of the Icebreaker questions is to get everyone to share something personal. This first question is intended to be answered by everyone in attendance. You may find it beneficial to send this question out to the group members in advance, so they can think about their answer.*

What is one of the worst injuries you've had in your life?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever wondered how an all-loving and all-powerful God would allow so much suffering in the world? If He loves us so much and He has the power to prevent suffering, why would He not? How have you tried to make sense of this tension?

2. If someone told you that suffering proves that there is no such thing as an all-loving, all-powerful God, how would you respond?

3. What are some situations that come to mind where suffering is appropriate? When might pain be a good thing?

<sup>[L][SEP]</sup>4. If every experience of pain and suffering had a reasonable explanation, how might that change the way someone understands the relationship between God & pain? <sup>[L][SEP]</sup>5. When was a time you experienced pain and suffering that seemed to have no explanation? How did you feel about God in the midst of that suffering? <sup>[L][SEP]</sup>

**\*\*\*Have someone read the quote from Isaiah 55:8-9 & Romans 11:33-34\*\*\*** <sup>[L][SEP]</sup>

5. How do these passages impact the way we experience unexplainable suffering?

6. What effect does the free will of people to reject God and His goodness have on suffering in the world? If God were to anyone from ever doing anything that might cause another person to experience suffering, how would that affect your life?

**\*\*\*Have someone read Romans 8:18-25\*\*\***

7. According to this passage, who subjected the creation itself to “frustration”? How does that help to explain suffering that comes from natural disaster or diseases that aren’t necessarily caused by someone’s sin?

8. According to this passage, why does God subject the creation to frustration?

9. What are some of the insights this passage gives us about hope in general, and Christian hope in particular? Underline anything that you think tells us about hope.

10. Considering what we learn about hope in this passage, why might suffering be a good thing in this present life? What might happen if our current lives were all pleasant and pain-free? Why might this be worse than our current sufferings? [1]  
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11. How have you seen comfort and success in life lead you or someone close to you away from God? How have you seen suffering or distress lead people closer to God?

**\*\*\*Have someone read Romans 8:31-32\*\*\***

12. What does the fact the God didn’t even spare His own Son from suffering tell us about our suffering? How does Jesus’ willingness to enter into our pain impact how you see your suffering?

13. Is anyone struggling to trust God in the midst of current struggles or suffering? What are you dealing with? Does anyone want prayer for difficulties that you’re currently facing?

***Take some time to pray for anyone who needs prayer***

14. What might we be able to do for each other to help us remember the hope that we have even in the midst of difficult seasons?

**Closing Prayer**