

“Hope For The Hurting”  
Growth Group Discussion Guide  
May 12, 2024

*As you gather for discussion, open with prayer. You may choose to use or adapt the following:*

*Loving Father, we ask your presence, wisdom, and comfort as we devote this time reflect on dark times in our life and the sad realities in a fallen world. God, as we do, we ask that we see in hindsight how you have held us in your hand, in ways that we might not have noticed at the time. We ask for the insight as we share with each other tonight, that it may help us see you clearer when we face tough times in the future. We pray that as we hear each other's stories and reflections it would grow our love and care for one another. And through our time together, please remind us of the hope we have in Christ, that he is with us always, to the end of the age. Amen.*

Icebreaker questions:

- After hearing the sermon, how do you feel about questioning God, or confronting him with your feelings?
- What impact has suffering, pain, or hardship (yours, or others' that you've seen) had on your faith?
  - o If it brought you closer to God, how? What made the difference?
  - o Did it make you question God – his existence, or his love?

Pastor Andy quoted 4 times when people questioned God, or confessed their doubts in the Bible (Jesus on the cross – Mark 14:34; Psalm 22; the father of the boy – “help my unbelief” Mark 9:24; Job 10).

- Can you think of other Biblical examples?
- Are there any parameters to what we can or cannot say or do when we talk with God this way?

One quote from Andy's sermon was, “You can question God, as long as you commit to listening for a response.”

- What are the ways that we listen for a response from God?
- Have you ever heard or perceived such a response, either in the moment or over time?
  - o How do you know this was from God?

Nicky Gumble lists 4 related and overlapping theological approaches to how the Bible presents suffering:

- o Suffering as the consequences of human freedom
- o God works through suffering
- o God more than compensates for suffering
- o God is involved in our suffering

- Which of the above do you find most helpful to your faith?
- Are there other ways that you see how the Bible talks about suffering?

Andy went a step further by saying that “God redeems our suffering.” That is, He takes something useless and turns it into something valuable.

- Do you agree that suffering, outside of the hope of our faith, is useless? What other use might it have, say, for someone who isn’t Christian?
- In what way has this been true for you? How has a tough situation for you led to something that helped you grow?
  - o Do you disagree? Is suffering just useless?

Read Romans 5:1-5.

- Discuss the progression of suffering -> perseverance -> character -> hope
  - o Does Paul’s logic resonate with your experience?
  - o How have you found one of these steps to be true?
  - o Are there any other steps you would add to this progression?

Pastor Andy listed 4 suggestions to help you when you or a loved one is suffering:

- First, just cry out to God. Tell him everything that hurts about the situation.
- Listen for a response from him.
- Do not isolate. Involve others in your situation to care for and support you.
- Turn toward God, not away from him.
  - o Do any of these confuse you, or sound unhelpful?
  - o What other suggestions would you add for others?

*Allow the following question to lead you to closing in prayer:*

The sermon closed with the notion that God sometimes puts others in our lives (or vice versa) to support and comfort during hard times.

- As you close, ask if there is a way that you might be this for each other.
- Is there someone in your life that God may intend you to be attentive to their needs and respond in love? What might you do for them?