

Life Lesson – Making It Live

David Welsh | “Why Do the Innocent Suffer?” | Select Passages from Job | June 4 and 5

Dealing with Suffering

How do you deal with suffering? Do you cry a lot? Do you complain? Do you pray and ask God why?

There are a lot of ways people deal with suffering. **Discuss each of the following:** A few deny its existence.

You know, mind over matter: If I deny that it exists, it will eventually go away. Some reject God’s existence. If there is no God who is in control, then this suffering is purely chance. But without God, the problems only get worse. Still others try to redefine God. God must not be omnipotent or why would He allow this to happen? Again, the question is: “How do *you* deal with suffering.” Let’s look at some possibilities.

Why does God allow suffering?

If you are a Christian, why does God allow you to suffer? Good question, isn’t it? Why doesn’t God step in and do something to stop our suffering? Two reasons: First, God wanted to give us choice – so that we might choose to serve Him freely and lovingly. God chose to teach us the reality of sincere love and genuine obedience. Secondly: God knew that we would learn more about Him and honor Him if we were given the freedom to first go our own way. Read Isaiah 45:7. **Discuss:** We don’t have to excuse God when it comes to suffering. He is sovereign over all things, but God chooses to leave things exactly as they are so that He might reveal Himself clearly in our suffering and pain.

Help in Time of Suffering

What do you say or do when someone you love is suffering? Do you tell them what they are doing wrong? Do you make suggestions as to what they ought to be doing? Read Job 2:11-13. Sometimes all we need to do is to be there – to hold a hand – to give a hug and say, I love you. To be totally honest, we don’t have all the answers. And even if we did, there is a right time to share them. Can you share if there is someone you know who needs you to “just be there?”

Reasons for Suffering

Do you believe that there is a purpose in your suffering? We all know it is hard to see purpose in suffering while we are going through it – but have you ever considered there might be some purpose? There are many reasons for suffering but let’s consider four. **Discuss each of the following:** #1 *We live in an imperfect world.* The existence of sin guarantees the existence of suffering. We live in a fallen, imperfect world and things – bad things – happen. (Read Matthew 5:45). #2 *Suffering can be a means of correction.* When we are headed in the wrong direction, God sometimes allows suffering as a consequence of sin in order to put us back on course. #3 *God uses suffering as a constructive measure in our lives.* Paul said, “...suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” God uses suffering in our lives to build character, hope and empathy in our lives. We could not be that strong, sympathetic, kind believer if the difficult circumstances in our life had not made us stronger. #4 *Suffering enters our lives to bring glory to God.* (Read John 9:1-3) Many of us can look back on times of suffering and realize that what we went through brought glory to God. If you are going through a time of suffering and cannot see how good can come from it, how can you trust God and know that he loves you? Share how you can submit to Him so that He can be glorified through you?

The Main Purpose

What do you consider to be the overriding purpose for suffering in Christians? There is one purpose that God wants to accomplish in our lives – to be like Christ. **Discuss:** God has not promised to remove our trials but He has promised to grant us grace in the midst of them. He doesn’t want us to become Christians as an insurance policy against trouble. He wants to show the world that His people are able to suffer like the rest of the world and still trust Him. If we do not know how to endure suffering, how will anyone know? Share how you will trust Him to do that for you.

Written by Sandy Hooper