

Experiencing Jesus in the Midst of Suffering

The Lord is _____ and _____ toward me.

Psalms 145:8-13 The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made...The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made. NIV84

Healing is _____ found through _____.

Job 38:4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand." NIV84

Compassion exists _____ from _____.

How did God feel about Job before, during, and after his suffering?

Job 1:8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." NIV84

Job 42:12 The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. NIV84

How did God feel about the Israelites before the burning bush?

Exodus 3:7 The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering." NIV84

How did God feel about Joseph while he was sold into slavery or in prison?

The LORD was with Joseph when he was 17.

Genesis 37:2-9 ...Joseph, a young man of seventeen...had a dream...⁹Then he had another dream... NIV84

The LORD was with Joseph in Potiphar's house.

Genesis 39:2-3 The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. ³When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, NIV84

The LORD was with Joseph in prison and gave him success.

Genesis 39:19-23 Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden...²³The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did. NIV84

The LORD was with Joseph in prison when he interpreted the dreams.

Genesis 40:4-22 After they had been in custody for some time...the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison — had a dream...

Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

...Pharaoh...restored the chief cupbearer... [and] hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation. ²³The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him. NIV84

The LORD was with Joseph when he interpreted Pharaoh's dream, 13 years after he was sold into slavery.

Genesis 41:16 "I cannot [interpret your dream]," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." NIV84

Genesis 41:46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt... NIV84

The LORD was with Joseph in placing him over Egypt.

Genesis 45:8-9 "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. ⁹Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay.'" NIV84

The LORD was with Joseph when it was all over.

Genesis 41:51 Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh [forget] and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." NIV84

Suffering is not a _____.

Genesis 2:17 "...you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." NIV84

My battle is against _____.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. NIV84

Biblical Examples of Suffering:

Anger

- Jonah about plant (Jonah 4:9)

Death

- Ruth's husband Elimelech (Ruth 1:3)
- David grieves Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:26)
- David grieves Absalom (2 Sam. 19:2)
- Rizpah watches over sons' bodies (2 Sam. 21:10-13)
- Widow of Zarephath (1 Ki. 17:17-18)
- Anna the prophetess (Luke 2:36-37)
- Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:52)
- Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
- Jesus (Mark 16:10)
- Stephen (Acts 8:2)

Infertility

- Sarai & Abram (Gen. 11:30)
- Rebekah & Isaac (Gen. 25:21)
- Rachel & Jacob (Gen. 30:1)
- Samson's mom & Manoah (Judges 13:3)
- Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1-17)
- Elisha's Shunammite friend (2 Kings 4:14)
- Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:7)

Persecution (taunting)

- Hannah (rival wife) (1 Samuel 1:7)
- Sarah (rival) (Gen. 16:5)

Religious persecution

- Israelites by Egyptians (Deut. 26:6)
- James (killed in Acts 12:2)
- John the Baptist (Beheaded in Mk. 6:27)
- Jesus
- Hall of Faithers (Hebrews 11)
- Paul's suffering (2 Cor. 11:25-29)

Physical ailment

- Job (Job 1-2)
- Man born blind (John 9:1-7)
- Paul's "thorn" (2 Cor. 12:7)

Shame (undeserved)

- David's men shaved and humiliated (2 Sam. 10:4-5)
- Tamar (2 Sam. 13:19-20)

Sin

- Haman (Ruth)
- Lamentations
- Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:33)
- Jonah (Jonah)
- [Jesus said,] "Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." (John 5:14)
- Pierced selves with grief (1 Tim. 6:10)
- Unrepentant sin brings discipline (Rev. 3:19)

Miscellaneous

- Joseph (Acts 7:10)
- Paul's suffering (2 Cor. 11:25-29)

Causes of Suffering

Personal sin

Prov. 19:3 A man's own folly ruins life
1 Cor. 1:30 Many sick, some have died
Rev. 3:19 God disciplines his children

Sins of others

Joshua 7 Achen's sin impacted nation
2 Sam. 24 David's sin brought plague

Sins of the nation

2 Chr. 7:13-14 Deliverance waiting upon repentance

We may be tested

Heb. 3:8 Israelites tested in desert
Heb. 11:17-18 Abraham tested
Jas. 1:3 Testing develops endurance
Jas. 1:12 Crown for those who stand test
1 Pet. 1:5-7 Faith proved genuine through trials

Builds character

Romans 5:2-5 Suffering produces character
James 1:3 Testing develops perseverance
1 Pet. 4:1-2 Helps us die to self and overcome sin

God glorified

1 Pet. 1:5-7 Tested faith glorifies God
John 9:1-3 Jesus heals man born blind
John 11:4 Glorified through Lazarus's death

God lets sin run its course

Gen. 15:13-16 Sin of Amorites running course

We live in a fallen world

Rom. 5:12 Sin came into world through Adam

Spiritual battle

Job 1:6-11 God and Satan engaged in spiritual battle
Dan. 10:12-14 Michael detained in spiritual battle

Results in greater good

Matt. 16:21 Jesus died for greater good

It brings us into relationship with Him

Ps. 78:34 When he killed them they sought Him
Matt. 5:4 Those who mourn are comforted
2 Cor. 1:3-7 God comforts in our troubles
1 Cor. 7:6 God comforts the downcast
Phil. 3:10-11 Fellowship of His sufferings
1 Pet. 4:13 Rejoice to participate in His sufferings
1 Pet. 5:10 God will restore you

Brings human comfort

2 Sam. 12:24 David comforted Bathsheba
Romans 12:15 Mourn with those who mourn

Helps us keep perspective on what is important

Ecc. 7:2 House of mourning better

Suffering brings rewards

Acts 5:41 They rejoiced because they were found worthy to suffer
2 Cor. 4:17 Troubles achieve eternal glory
Phil. 1:29 Granted to you to suffer
Heb. 11:35 Suffering brought better resurrection
James 5:10-11 Crown of life after persevering
James 5:11 Job blessed through perseverance
1 Pet. 2:19-21 Commendable to bear suffering
1 Pet. 3:13-14 Blessed to suffer for what is right
1 Pet. 4:14 Blessed to be insulted

Suffering Verses for Further Study (New English Translation):

Psalms 30:5b One may experience sorrow during the night, but joy arrives in the morning.

Psalms 34:18-19 The Lord is near the brokenhearted; he delivers those who are discouraged.¹⁹The godly face many dangers, but the Lord saves them from each one of them.

Psalms 119:50 This is what comforts me in my trouble, for your promise revives me.

Psalms 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted, and bandages their wounds.

Isaiah 53:3 He was despised and rejected by people, one who experienced pain and was acquainted with illness; people hid their faces from him; he was despised, and we considered him insignificant.

Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

Acts 5:41 So they left the council rejoicing because they had been considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name.

Acts 9:16 "For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

Romans 5:2-5 ...we rejoice in the hope of God's glory...we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴and endurance, character, and character, hope...

Romans 8:18 For I consider that our present sufferings cannot even be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us.

Romans 8:35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 And I say this, brothers and sisters: The time is short. So then those who have wives should be as those who have none,³⁰those with tears like those not weeping...

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 Blessed is...God...who comforts us in all our troubles so that we may be able to comfort those experiencing any trouble with the

comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.⁵For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow toward us, so also our comfort through Christ overflows to you.⁶But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort that you experience in your patient endurance of the same sufferings that we also suffer.⁷And our hope for you is steadfast because we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you will share in our comfort.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our momentary, light suffering is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison

Philippians 1:29 For it has been granted to you not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for him.

Philippians 3:10-11 My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death...

1 Thessalonians 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, when you received the message with joy...despite great affliction.

1 Thessalonians 3:2-3 We sent Timothy...to strengthen you and encourage you about your faith,³so that no one would be shaken by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this.

2 Thessalonians 1:4 As a result we ourselves boast...for your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and afflictions you are enduring.

2 Timothy 1:8 So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me, a prisoner for his sake, but by God's power accept your share of suffering for the gospel.

2 Timothy 1:12 Because of this, in fact, I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, because I know the one in whom my faith is set and I am convinced that he is able to protect what has been entrusted to me until that day.

2 Timothy 2:8-9 Remember Jesus Christ...such is my gospel,⁹for which I suffer hardship to the point of imprisonment as a criminal, but God's message is not imprisoned!

2 Timothy 3:10-11 You, however, have followed my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my endurance,¹¹ as well as the persecutions and sufferings that happened to me in Antioch, in Iconium, and in Lystra.

Hebrews 2:18 For since he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

Hebrews 10:32-39 But remember the former days when you endured a harsh conflict of suffering after you were enlightened.³³ At times you were publicly exposed to abuse and afflictions, and at other times you came to share with others who were treated in that way.³⁴ For in fact you shared the sufferings of those in prison, and you accepted the confiscation of your belongings with joy, because you knew that you certainly had a better and lasting possession.³⁵ So do not throw away your confidence, because it has great reward.³⁶ For you need endurance in order to do God's will and so receive what is promised...

James 1:2-4 My brothers and sisters, consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials,³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.⁴ And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be perfect and complete, not deficient in anything.

James 1:12 Happy is the one who endures testing, because when he has proven to be genuine, he will receive the crown of life that God promised to those who love him.

James 5:10-11 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name.¹¹ Think of how we regard as blessed those who have endured. You have heard of Job's endurance and you have seen the Lord's purpose, that the Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

1 Peter 1:6-7 This brings you great joy, although you may have to suffer for a short time in various trials.⁷ Such trials show the proven character of your faith, which is much more valuable than gold—gold that is tested by fire, even though it is passing away—and will bring praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Peter 2:19-21 For this finds God's favor, if because of conscience toward God someone endures hardships in suffering unjustly.²⁰ For what credit is it if you sin and are mistreated and endure it? But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God.²¹ For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps.

1 Peter 3:14 But in fact, if you happen to suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed...

1 Peter 3:17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if God wills it, than for doing evil.

1 Peter 4:1 So, since Christ suffered in the flesh, you also arm yourselves with the same attitude, because the one who has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin,

1 Peter 4:12-19 Dear friends, do not be astonished that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as though something strange were happening to you.¹³ But rejoice in the degree that you have shared in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice and be glad.¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory, who is the Spirit of God, rests on you.¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or thief or criminal or as a troublemaker.¹⁶ But if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but glorify God that you bear such a name.¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin, starting with the house of God. And if it starts with us, what will be the fate of those who are disobedient to the gospel of God?¹⁸ And if the righteous are barely saved, what will become of the ungodly and sinners?¹⁹ So then let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator as they do good.

1 Peter 5:10 And, after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

2 Peter 2:9 ...the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from their trials, and to reserve the unrighteous for punishment at the day of judgment.

Comforting Verses in Times of Suffering (New English Translation):

Isaiah 41:10 Don't be afraid, for I am with you!
Don't be frightened, for I am your God!
I strengthen you—yes, I help you—yes,
I uphold you with my saving right hand!

Psalms 23 *A psalm of David.*

¹The Lord is my shepherd...

⁴Even when I must walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no danger, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff reassure me...

⁶Surely your goodness and faithfulness
will pursue me all my days,
and I will live in the Lord's house
for the rest of my life.

Psalms 27:13-14 Where would I be if I did not
believe I would experience the Lord's favor in the
land of the living? ¹⁴Rely on the Lord! Be strong
and confident! Rely on the Lord!

Psalms 34:18-19 The Lord is near the broken-
hearted; he delivers those who are discouraged.

¹⁹The godly face many dangers, but the Lord saves
them from each one of them.

Psalms 73:28 But as for me, God's presence is all I
need...

Psalms 116:7 Rest once more, my soul, for the
Lord has vindicated you.

Lamentations 3:32-33 Though he causes us grief,
he then has compassion on us according to the
abundance of his loyal kindness. ³³For he is not
predisposed to afflict or to grieve people.

Joel 2:13 Return to the Lord your God, for he is
merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and
boundless in loyal love—often relenting from
calamitous punishment.

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are
weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Luke 10:20 "Nevertheless, do not rejoice that the
spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names
stand written in heaven."

John 16:33 "...In the world you have trouble and
suffering, but take courage—I have conquered the
world."

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love
for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ
died for us.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work
together for good for those who love God, who are
called according to his purpose

Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in
former times was written for our instruction, so
that through endurance and through
encouragement of the scriptures we may have
hope.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed is the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and
God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our
troubles so that we may be able to comfort those
experiencing any trouble with the comfort with
which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about
anything. Instead, in every situation, through
prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your
requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God that
surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts
and minds in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unjust so as to forget
your work and the love you have demonstrated for
his name, in having served and continuing to serve
the saints.

James 4:7-10 So submit to God. But resist the devil
and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and
he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you
sinners, and make your hearts pure, you double-
minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn, and weep. Turn your
laughter into mourning and your joy into despair.
¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will
exalt you.

Revelation 21:4 "He will wipe away every tear
from their eyes, and death will not exist any more
—or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the former
things have ceased to exist."

Suffering

Discussion Questions

Icebreaker option 1: Tell about a scar that you have and how you got it.

Icebreaker option 2: Tell about a time when life got so hard you questioned God.

- 1) Since we believe in an all-powerful and loving God, it is natural to want to know why God allows us to suffer. Think of some of the hardest trials of your life. Do you think it is possible to believe in God's goodness without knowing the answers as to why He allowed those trials in your life? If it is possible, explain how. If it is not possible, then how can we find peace when we can't find those answers?
- 2) It is far easier to believe that God loves us and is compassionate toward us when we are not currently suffering (or in other words, when we've been delivered from our past trials). So our perceptions about how God feels about us waver based on our trials. Does God's love and compassion actually waver?
- 3) How does understanding that suffering is a normal and expected part of life take the edge off of the pain of suffering? Or does it?
- 4) When we think about the next ten years of our lives, we can expect to go through some hard times. Yet when new trials come they always seem so shocking. Why is that? How can we have hope when we live in a broken and fallen world that continues to bring sickness, death, and sin into our lives?
- 5) How can we cling to God when overwhelmed with various trials? How can we draw near to God in those times when we feel hurt by Him?
- 6) What has encouraged you and given you hope and comfort in tough times?
- 7) Is there anything you would like to do now, that might help you prepare for trials ahead?