



KICK OFF

Why is this such a hard question for us to answer?



KEY VERSE

'In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,'



BIG IDEA

Our understanding and experience of suffering must be framed by the redemption and resurrection of Jesus Christ, through whom evil and suffering were beaten.



INVESTIGATE

MAKING SENSE OF YOUR CURRENT EXPERIENCE (Vs 6—12)

Read 1 Corinthians 2:15

1. Who is Paul speaking to here? How does this help a Christian think through the big questions, especially, as western society constantly says, Christians are ignorant, narrow and incapable of understanding the real world.
2. How are 6—9 in 1 Peter 1 realistic and honest?
3. What is the purpose of suffering? Vs 6—9
4. Of whom did the prophets speak? Vs 10—12. How does this help us to cope with suffering?

A SOLID HOPE FOR THE FUTURE (vs 1—5)

Read 1 Peter 1: 1—5

5. What does the word 'hope' in vs 3 mean?
6. What is the basis of the Christian's hope?
7. Of what is the resurrection a foretaste? Vs 4—5
8. What is the identity of the Christian in vs 1—2. How does this help in the midst of suffering?



DIG DEEPER

Timothy Keller quotes Alistair McGrath who in his history of atheism says: 'The 20th century gave rise to one of the greatest and most distressing paradoxes of human history: that the greatest intolerance and violence of that century were practiced by those who believed that religion caused intolerance and violence.' (p 5 Timothy Keller *The Reason for God*.)

'There is an appearance of humility in the protestation that the truth is much greater than anyone of us can grasp, but if this is used to invalidate all claims to to discern the truth it is in fact an arrogant claim to be kind of knowledge which is superior to [to all]....we have to ask: 'what is the [absolute] vantage ground from which you claim to be able to relativise all the absolute claims these different scriptures make?' (Keller p 9 quoting Newbegin in *The Reason for God*).



THINK AND APPLY



9. Imaging this scenario: A friend comes to you upset because he or she recently experienced some form of personal suffering (for example, the death of a loved one) and says, “I can’t believe God who would allow this to happen to me—who would allow this evil and suffering.” Order these possible responses from most to least helpful and explain why.

A: Reassuringly and thoughtfully remind your friend that God always “works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28).

B: Gently and with compassion try to tell your friend about why God might allow their suffering.

C: With compassion and love say things like, “I’m sure that somehow it’s all going to work out for the best.”

D: Listen to your friend without saying much in response.

E: Put an arm around your friend and kindly use phrases such as, “Remember it will make you stronger.”

10. Over the years, people who try to defend the existence of God have come up with theodicies—good reasons why God allows evil. Read aloud the two most common theodicies below:

A: *The Punishment Theodicy*. “Because humankind rebelled, the suffering of the world is the deserved punishment for sin.”

B: *The Free Will Theodicy*. “If God wanted people to freely choose the good, they would have to have been free to choose evil. The greater good of having true children (rather than robots) entails the risk of abuse of free will.”

11. The Bible is also filled with many verses that help Christians understand the general purposes for suffering. Can you recall some of these?

‘Christians, then, should expect to find nonbelievers who are much nicer, kinder, wiser, and better than they are. Why? Christian believers are not accepted by God because of their moral performance, wisdom, or virtue, but because of Christ’s work on their behalf. Most religion and philosophies of lie assume that one’s spiritual status depends on your religious attainments. This naturally leads adherents to feel superior to those who don’t believe and behave as they do. The Christian gospel, in any case, should not have that effect. (Keller p 19 The Reason for God).

PRAISE GOD for Jesus’ authority as: teacher, the Christ, Lord, Saviour, Judge and God.

CONFESS that our lives have not been attractive as in Jeremiah 29: 4—7

ASK GOD that Jesus’ gospel, standards, values and priorities will be evidence in the life of his community: the church.

PRAY ALSO that we would humbly and honestly answer people’s questions about Christianity.



Praise God for the challenges raised Praying for others in your group: by God’s Word through this study?

PRAYER



How does this passage apply to our daily life?

FAMILY DISCUSSION



For next week—see you in the New Year! Merry Christmas!!

READ AHEAD