

COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY GUIDE

COVID Exposures

SUFFERING

OVERVIEW

This COVID-era, along with all the other tensions pressing in on us, has exposed various issues we constantly face. To be sure, COVID didn't cause these issues any more than a truck driving over a bridge causes a crack to finally give way. As followers of Jesus, we need to be attentive to the world around us and the temptations inside of us that we might apply the truth of the gospel to all parts of our lives as we seek to find complete joy in Jesus.

APPLY // SUFFERING

Main Idea: While we may not know exactly “why” God allows suffering to happen, we can trust the Lord has his purposes and his promises offer hope. The Lord is sovereign over suffering and providential in suffering.

1. What does it mean that God is sovereign *over* suffering? What passages of Scripture come to mind to support this truth? Why is God's sovereignty over suffering good news?
2. What does it mean that God is providential *in* suffering? What passages of Scripture come to mind to support this truth? Why is God's providence in suffering good news?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. A case study of how to suffer.
4. What's the significance of Paul saying we are “jars of clay”? What does that mean? How does this inform how we should think about suffering and hardships in life?
5. How does our jars-of-clayness “show the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” How does this provide help and hope in the midst of our own suffering?
6. Notice Paul's contrasts in verses 8-9. How do these words reveal Paul's honesty and hope? What enabled Paul to be honest about his hardships? How did the gospel enable Paul to continually say “but not”?
7. How can we help each other live with honesty about our own suffering and hardships? How can we help each other live with the hope of “but not” ever before us?
8. Reread verses 16-18. In verse 16, what does it mean that our “outer nature is wasting away” but our “inner nature is being renewed day-by-day?” Why is this truth often hard to embrace, let alone enjoy, in the midst of suffering?
9. In 1:8 Paul says he was “burdened beyond [his] strength.” Now he says his affliction is “light and momentary.” What does Paul mean in each instance? How can both of these be true?
10. Why is his burden now “light and momentary”? What does it mean that current affliction is “preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison”?
11. Why is it important to understand Paul isn't minimizing the pain of suffering but rather maximizing the infinite pleasures of heaven? What's the danger in only trying to minimize the suffering?
12. What is Paul's direction in verse 18? What does it mean to “look to things that are unseen”? How do we do this when we or ourselves are suffering?

PRAY TOGETHER

Spend time praying together.

1. Praise God that he knows our suffering because he entered into it in the person of Jesus Christ.
2. Praise God that one day suffering will be no more because Jesus rose, reigns, and will soon return.
3. Praise God that he sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us that we might be comforted in the midst of our suffering.
4. Pray that the comfort of the gospel wouldn't remain abstract but become all the more real to us, especially in/through difficult days.
5. Pray that we would weep with those who weep.
6. Pray for those acutely suffering in our church body right now, that the Lord would bring comfort, hope, and healing.
7. Ask the Spirit to give us the language of lament, that we might honestly cry out to the Lord.
8. Pray that we would hold tightly to the Lord's promises in the midst of the confusion suffering can bring.
9. Pray that we wouldn't say well-meaning but unhelpful things to people when they are suffering, that we'd be okay even with silence and the ministry of presence.
10. Ask the Lord to grant us perseverance in the midst of living in this beautiful yet broken world, that we'd suffer well.
11. Pray that our hope in heaven

ACCOUNTABILITY

Relationships developed and deepened during accountability provide regular encouragement, and when necessary admonition, to spur each other on to delight in the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Ask one another heart-probing, clarifying questions, and help each other apply the gospel to your lives.

QUESTION: Are you suffering? How can we come alongside your wounded and weary soul?