



Only at Disneyland

LAMENTATIONS 3:38

What does the Bible say about God's relationship to the problem of pain?

I. God's sovereignty covers every detail of pain and suffering in this broken world.

- A. No suffering reaches into this world apart from God's explicit decree and specific permission. (*Lam 3:38; Am 3:6; Isa 45:7; Ex 4:11; 1 Thes 3:3*)
- B. God may not be the first cause of all struggles, but by the time they reach the individual they are His divine will. (*Jas 1:13; Ps 115:1-3; Eph 1:11; 2 Cor 11:23-33*)

#Lesson 1: **GOD** _____ !

II. God has specific purposes for every trial in your life because He wants the best for you.

- A. In His love God sorts through everything that comes into my life. (*Ps 139:16; Mk 4:35-41; Phil 4:11-13*)
- B. With love and sensitivity my hurts are recycled by God to work a specific purpose in my life. (*Rom 8:28-29; Acts 2:22-23*)

#Lesson 2 : **GOD** _____ !

III. The core of God's plan is to teach us to hate sin and to lift up our eyes toward our future in Christ.

- A. My sufferings and pain are allowed in light of how they give glory to God. (*Jn 9:3*)
- B. My struggles are allowed in order to conform me to the image His Son, our Lord Jesus. (*Phil 3:8-9; 2 Cor 4:8-10*)

#Lesson 3: **GOD HAS A** _____ !

We don't live by explanations, but by promises ...

The promise of His constant _____ with us
... for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

The promise that He is at _____ in our pain
Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope ... Romans 5:3-4

The promise that suffering is _____
"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:3-4

**GOD ALWAYS SEEMS BIGGER TO THOSE WHO NEED HIM MOST —
AND SUFFERING IS THE TOOL GOD USES TO HELP US NEED HIM MORE.**

FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION **ALONE WITH THE LORD**

1. Take a moment to prepare your heart by praising God for Who He is. Ask Him to cleanse you from sin and to open your mind to the prompting of His Spirit as you study His Word.
2. Describe an occasion when you first questioned God's goodness. What happened, and how was your view of God affected?

Have you reconciled yourself to God's goodness and love since then? What changed your thinking?

3. Read the quotes in the box at right. In your view, is God worthy of your worship and love even if He allows pain in your life? How do you know?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. Paul lists all the ways he has suffered even though he was obedient to God. How does his attitude shed light on your own response to suffering?
5. Talk to the Lord for a time. Pray for God to reveal to you His love in the midst of pain.

#On Suffering

"We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

—C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

"The key question ... is not 'Why do the righteous suffer?' but 'Do we worship a God who is worthy of our suffering?' ... God is worthy of my love and obedience even if He does not bless us materially and protect us from pain."

—Warren W. Wiersbe, *Why Us? When Bad Things Happen to God's People*

"My question to you is not 'Can you believe in God?' but 'Can you believe in *this* God?' It is not only possible to believe in Him; it is also possible to know Him and to experience His love."

—Dick Tripp

FOR DISCUSSION IN **SMALL GROUP**

1. Is there a place you view as your "Disneyland" where you go to escape?
2. What is God teaching you through the sermon about suffering? What does the C.S. Lewis quote above teach you about suffering?
3. Where do you suffer most in life? Are you willing to share this with your group and allow them to pray for you and minister to you?
4. Have someone read aloud the Scriptures listed on the sermon notes about the promises of God. Which of these is the most precious to you right now and why?
5. Close your time together by praying for individual answers to question #3. As this series unfolds, the group will continue to apply what they're learning to the ways group members are suffering.