

Why Do We Suffer?

QUESTIONS FOR GOD WEEK 2

When we suffer, we acknowledge our need for Heaven.

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Core Scripture 

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 "For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him." **ESV**

// Introduction

- **Mary's Grief** - *let's bookend this sermon like the hook of a song - at the end, come back to Mary's grief and then her hope restored at the revelation of the resurrection.*

The first people to arrive at the tomb on resurrection woman were realist - not gullable fanatics

Mary Magnalene was the first to arrive at the tomb. Think about that. A woman The Saturday before was the Jewish sabbath so she was forced to wait 24 hours before to honor the loss of her Rabbi.

They had an elaborate process of grief - clothing themselves in ashes and specific cloths. They used certain

To dust you are and to dust you will return.

"Our Rabbi has returned to the dust" Mary thought. It's time to go to the funeral She hadn't done the work of grieving on Saturday bc it was the Sabbath. She couldn't show up with flowers or anointing oil. She had to wait until Sunday.

While many slept well that night, Mary didn't. She tossed and turned thinking of memories of her Rabbi, her Jesus, her Lord and friend who stood between her and certain death. He was the one who risked his life when people held their stones ready to murder her.

He was the only man who didn't see her as something to be used but rather someone to be loved.

And now ... He's gone. She was going to be first to His tomb. Before the sun could fully come over the horizon, she was walking back up the dusty road where just days before they tortured and crucified her Jesus. That long slow walk made the grief of her death feel that more real - that more final. "He really is gone" She must have thought.

She was going to there, ready to honor Him with flowers and perfume - the only way she knew how.

She was grieving. Her eyes were fighting the tears. Her lungs could barely breath for three days straight.

#1 When we suffer, we acknowledge our need for Heaven.

"Grief causes all of us to realize that we were made for a perfect place, a place with no pain."

- Mary was grieving at the loss of *her* Lord and friend. "They have moved *my* Lord's body!" Her mind was riddled with questions. Why? Why did He have to suffer? Why would they kill Jesus? What is the sense of all this suffering?

- Practical Illustration/Story: **When Leah Dixon's car hit a tree**, we were told it would be a miracle if she made it. She was unable to move or speak for weeks and weeks turned into months. Can you imagine hearing your daughter was likely going to be in a vegetative state and likely wouldn't recover. One Dr even suggested pulling the plug. Every parent has to make their own choices but for Joel and Gina they decided to believe that God was going to heal her - even if it was gradual.
- She did recover - it took months and months of therapy but she recovered and has that great smile we grew up with right here at Victory Christian School - running through these halls together.
- Story: When
- We hold on to scriptures like Ps 126:5 "Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy."

// Main Point #2 When we suffer, Jesus grieves with us from Heaven

God's Word says that He is NEAR to the broken hearted. He comforts us. His name is even COMFORTER according the prophet Isaiah.

-  Lk 19:41-44 Jesus feels such empathy and compassion towards the people of Israel who didn't receive Him / who didn't see the revelation of His identity as their Messiah

Jesus feels empathy for us and we like Mary often ask “Why?” in light of our loss and suffering

When we can't fight the tears - like from 10pm till midnight last night - we can find comfort in knowing what the Word of God says. God allowed David - even inspired David - to write his Psalms of lament - his moments of sorrow and QUESTIONING in passages like Psalm 42.

Have you ever cried so long and so hard your eyes are just burning and the tears - they drip into your mouth although you try so hard to keep your composure and fight them? David has felt that too. Look what he says:

“My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?” (Talk about questions for God - in our grief, we ask “Where are you, God? Why aren't you doing someone to stop the suffering?”)

⁴ These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival. ⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation ⁶ and my God. ESV

When we grieve we must do what David did and put our hope in God. In fact, we must tell our emotions to get in line with truth!

David said “Soul (mind, will and emotions) put your hope in God!”

David said to himself “racing thoughts... questioning and doubt... put your hope in GOD!”

He would declare “GOD IS MY SALVATION! GOD IS WITH ME”

Sometimes you gotta praise your way out of grief. You see by the end of this passage of him crying out to God with all his questions and let's just say it - anger - he ends with a resounding declaration ... Ps 42:11

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

- When we suffer or when our loved ones suffer, we realize who short life really is - how fragile life is - how imperfect it is.

// Main Point #3 When we suffer, we find our eternal hope is Heaven.

-  Luke 12:35-40 (Jesus teaches about being ready for His return) *Important to have enough scripture in a sermon like this so they don't think this is just our opinion ...

Many people who don't believe in God and the reality of Heaven are agnostic (unbelieving) because they don't believe the life of Jesus could be proven and that logic and reason are at odds with faith and religion.

-  Luke 12:8-9 “And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.” ESV

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 | 5:1-11

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

5 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Did you hear that last part!? God has not planned that you suffer wrath and judgment for all your mistakes. He has planned that you be saved and trust in His Son who suffered unimaginable pain so that YOU and I wouldn't have to!

“God has not destined us for wrath (eternal judgment) but to obtain salvation through Jesus!”

In Scripture we find the answers to life's biggest questions.

Questions about suffering. We discover that there's pain in this world because Adam and Eve sinned and we sinned and for now, Satan is the “Prince of the Air” and for now, we live in this fallen world. Our question of “Will it ever get better?” Is answered by God's WORD with a resounding “YES” because Jesus promised to bring us into His perfect Heaven and even establish a “new heavens and a new earth” one day also known as a “New Jerusalem”

Close with Mary Magnalene's story

As Mary Magnalene walked that dusty road to Jesus' tomb, she thought “This really is it. He really is gone. Jesus is dead. I have to live in a new normal. I have to get used to it. He's gone. *Dust to dust*, a phrase used

often in the Jewish culture. Jesus, her friend and Lord, his life was over now and she would never see Him again.

As she got closer to the tomb she noticed the stone was open. She must have thought “those terrible Roman soldiers are so evil, they’re selling his grave clothes, they’re looking for the crown of thorns to use it in another game of gambling!” Her grief turned to anger and she thought “They’re trying to profit off of Him again! They’re selling his stuff.”

She got there and he was gone.

“They have taken my Lord out of the tomb I don’t know where they have put Him.”

John 20:2

She raced back to the disciples to give them the news to the disciples who were hiding - she told Peter “They took my Lord out of the tomb. They moved Him”

She’s a realist. She’s logical. She knows how ruthless the Roman soldiers are. She knows that death is abrupt and final. She trusted in Jesus sure, but for her - in this moment - He is GONE.

Jesus’ closest followers are also grieving.

They’re HIDING in FEAR of the Jewish leaders! They’re not waiting with bated breath at the tomb. They too were grieving thinking “Why do we suffer!?”

“Why are the promises of Jesus not holding water?”

“Where is GOD in the midst of my pain?”

If we’re honest, we’ve all asked that at times.

They were hiding out together with little to no food - no time to prepare. One minute they're leaving a passover feast. The next they're hearing about a trial that moved two locations before a deciding a death penalty for their Rabbi Jesus. When they woke up they had no answers. Only questions. Questions for God.

Questions for each other. How could they align the two realities - they walked with Jesus for 3 years - seeming Him do miracles - seeing Him heal others - WHY didn't He heal himself!? It just doesn't make sense.

In the midst of our grief, everything doesn't make sense. We can't see through the same exact lense of God bc like we said last week when we closed the sermon "Gods ways and thoughts are higher (superior) to our ways and our thoughts" In other words ... GOD IS working in the background even if we don't see it.

Now we know the truth of what was happening, the disciples and Mary didn't. They were grieving and they were confused. "Was Jesus lying? Were my eyes lying to me when I saw the miracles?" "What is happening?!?!" Questions for God! Racing in their mind.

Jesus' disciples were realist, not gullible fanatics.

Jesus as you know, enters the room, but not through the door... and surprises them. He HAD rose from the dead!

Thomas is the one Jesus speaks to the most. Why? He's the one who is questioning the most. Jesus always goes to the sheep farthest away - seeking to help them understand His power and love. Jesus tells Thomas "put your hands in my wounds"

Another moment, Jesus supernaturally appears to Mary and she things He's the grander until she hears Him call her name. She loved to hear

Him call her name! “Mary” Jesus said and she realized who He was. She realized He was alive!

John 20:14-16

In Luke 24, the disciple Luke described two people walking to Emmaus. They’re walking away from Jerusalem. They’re walking towards a new city and leaving the whole “faith” thing behind - they’re leaving Jerusalem - the city where they’re reminded of all that Jesus did and said. Jesus shows up to them and teaches them about the prophets and law and opened their eyes.

Our hope is NOT in this world. Our hope can only be in the perfect place called Heaven and more importantly the only One who can get us there and that is Jesus, God’s only Son.

Paul when writing letters to believers in Corinth said that if we don’t have the resurrection of Jesus then we have nothing. No footing - no ground to stand on and he’s right.

But we DO have the resurrection of Jesus!

You see you can say “Well, I only believe in science and what can be proven and the Bible can’t be proven.” Well I’d say a few things.

1st of all, many smart people believe the Bible *can* be proven.



They’ve found relics in archeology that reflect the Bibles’ stories.

They’ve found coins that were found in David’s temple - coins that had names of people IN the Bible. In 2016, archeologists found a series of small thrones in a semi circle one of which read “Pontious Pilate” The

dead sea scrolls found in the last decade - scrolls that dictate the Bible word for word! There's documentaries out there on Netflix like "Is Genesis History" that discuss some of these findings, even the age of the earth, and so I want to encourage you think about it for yourself. Think critically about what you believe and then what the ramifications are if your belief about God is correct or not.

And 2nd, think about this -



"Science can't give you meaning in life" - Timothy Keller

Science can't explain music or pain or suffering or hope either.

Science can't tell you what's right and wrong. Science can't tell you what to do with your guilt. Science can't explain what love is. Science can't explain to you why love exists. Science can't explain why you feel things emotionally during a song being beautifully played. Science can't explain why you feel all the things you and I feel as humans, the beauty of music, the pain of love lost, science can't explain that.

I'm all for science so don't get me wrong. Science is beautiful in that it doesn't make all conclusions - it simply explores. Discovery - that sort of science is beautiful and awesome. Where we get into trouble is when we think that science has disproven God. Quite the opposite is true. Many scientist have turned to God after years and years of scientific discovery because they can't ignore the idea that something must've put all of this order *into* order. The probability of the atmosphere being perfect to breath - the probability of the sun being just the right distance - all these things causes a logical, smart, education person to conclude... There *must* be a designer.

Science assumes there's a natural cause for everything.

The “wisdom of men” mentioned in 1 Corinthians would use the “senseless evil” argument or the “Suffering” argument.

If you argue as many do “If there’s a God then why is there so much senseless evil and suffering in the world?”

Why are there wars and thousands of death, greiving parents, siblings and children? Why is there cancer and other disease that rob the lives of great people?

 When we suffer and we think it over deeply, we often sadly come to this conclusion: “God is not powerful enough to stop it” or “God doesn’t care; He isn’t good enough to want to stop it.”

The concept of the atheist or skeptic who sees pain and suffering in the world is this: *Given all that pain, there can’t be an all-powerful, all-good God. He can’t exist.*

When you say there can’t be a God because of all the senseless evil out there, then how do you know it’s senseless? You can’t reason that God would be big enough to stop the suffering and yet not big enough to have reasons beyond your understanding. This is where FAITH comes in.

 **Reason has to hit a road block at some point in your life where you give up and say “even though I don’t have all the answers I’m going to surrender to God who DOES have all the answers; this is faith.**

Faith is believing beyond what you can see. Faith is believing the God who said that He sent His Son to die in my place and was raised to life 3 days later promising me new life. This kind of faith pleases God

scripture says. This kind of faith is what leads you and I into peace. This kind of faith in a God who's all-together bigger and wiser than us, **this is what gives you hope for the future and meaning for the present.** His law is love and His Gospel is peace. We learn to love one another and have meaning in life ONLY when we come to Jesus Christ, the one who died in our place and was raised to new life on the third day!

NANCY

For me and Danielle and Jessie and Emily who lost a sister last month

For my mom and dad who lost a daughter

We have ONE BIG reason to rejoice. Yes we grieve. Yes we cry at the mention of her name and seeing her face in a picture but we also smile.

HOW!?! We know that NANCY trusted in Jesus! His death and resurrection! Her relationship with Jesus was like Mary's. It was real! It was was vibrant! For Nancy, Jesus was not just something to believe in - not just "a higher power" For Nancy, Jesus was EVERYTHING! Jesus she would say "was my Lord" You could see it in her eyes - the eyes are the window to the soul and in Nancy's eyes was the reflection of her Lord JESUS! Her bridegroom and best friend! JESUS!

Another logical reason for anyone skeptical today is this - for you to believe in Jesus and His resurrection to new life and our promise of Heaven know that...

The authors of the Gospels wrote their accounts of being with Jesus within a few years of being with Jesus. What Mathew Mark Luke John experienced, they wrote down and there is a consistency among them that helps prove it's truth. Where there is differences they

are expected because they are different eye witness accounts much like 4 people who saw a car accident happen, they'd all tell it 80% the same but there'd be about 20% fluctuation of facts because of their perspective - how THEY saw it from where they were standing. These 4 guys wrote within 30 years of Jesus' life. Paul's letters are written within 50 years of Jesus life.

If 200 or 300 years pass, people can make stuff up.

If you tell me in 2002 there was a shooting on campus at my college I'd say "no there wasn't that. That was 18 years ago and I remember college quite well. That didn't happen. If you said in 1805 there was a shooting at that campus, I might just believe you - why - I wasn't there. So when Mathew Mark Luke John and Paul all write about Jesus with consistency within a 50 year time frame there's a validity to it. It's historical. It's eye witness account of not one but many people! Jesus really did rise from the dead and appear to hundreds and hundreds of people!

The eye witnesses are even named in some cases! Simon of Sirene helped carry the cross. He's the father of Alexander and Rufus. That was like footnotes we used today. It was there way of saying "this person is still alive and you can go talk to them."

If you're here in the room today or tuning in online the question now isn't what do OTHER people believe about Jesus. The question is

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS?

CUE FOR WILL AND TEAM TO COME BACK UP

 **Do you know if you're going to rise to new life when your life here is over? If you will trust Jesus then you CAN know.**

You can have blessed assurance and KNOW where you're going. You can know that you're going to Heaven to be in the presence of Almighty God for all eternity IF you trust Jesus here and now.

Jesus IS the way to TRUE LIFE - the LIFE that you've been looking for - the LIFE you've been unable to find in money, in fame, in position, in personal pleasure through relationships and even in TRYING on your own to be "good"

 John 1:12 "... to all who receive Jesus, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." NIV Have you asked God to forgive you and make you His child yet?

 The heart of the Gospel is **not** that you need to do more good than bad - that you need to get your act together - that you need to measure up. The Gospel message is that you are NOT good enough but Jesus is and that's why Jesus came. Jesus removes the suffering. His Heaven is perfect and His love is real!

- to give you HIS goodness and to rescue you from the sin mess that you and I were stuck in. The Gospel message is also not that some government ruler is going to solve all your problems and make things right. Jesus didn't need Rome and you don't need Washington to make things right in the world! Jesus changes a country by changing a man or woman from the inside out as His Spirit regenerates their dead heart! He changes us from the inside out - giving us a NEW spirit and a NEW heart - not better laws!

So if you're feeling like "Well I can't do Christianity because that's too much pressure on me - I can't live up to those standards. Friend I know the feeling - that's why we use phrases like "surrender to Jesus"

That's when grace kicks in is when we say "God I am NOT good enough and I need you to help me."

Christianity is recognizing my weakness and inadequacy.
Christianity is recognizing the adequacy and perfection of Jesus,
God's Son who relieves all suffering and grief with the promise of
new life!

Friend if you can't admit your weakness and the reality there must be a Creator behind everything than you have a lot of faith to DISbelieve in God. Personally, I think that it takes just as much faith to disbelieve in God as it does to believe in God. To ignore the evidence of millions of people experiencing the power and love of Jesus - to ignore thousands of criminals confessing their sins to God - turning from a life of selfish crime to a life of love and service - turning into a person that cares for people - a good dad or a good mom - a good employee and friend - to ignore all of that transformation of countless peoples lives - to ignore all of those millions of people who have had their lives transformed in a positive way by an experience with Jesus - to ignore that and believe God does not exists takes a *lot* of faith!

Do YOU have hope of the resurrection of Jesus as YOUR foundation?!

Do YOU know where you're going if cancer or a car wreck were to take your life?

Only the resurrection is our hope - HEAVEN

So I want to ask you today. What is your faith in? Are you putting your hope in the wisdom of men or the wisdom of God? Do you believe that God isn't powerful because He isn't stopping murder and grief and

cancer and sorrow? Because He hasn't answered all your questions ...
OR will you admit your inability to fully understand and place your trust
in the ONE WHO DOES?

The Wisdom of Men would say that man made God - that we fabricated God out of our imagination in our need for purpose and meaning - that God doesn't exist - that there is no heaven or hell - that all there is is what we see here and now.

The wisdom of God is hidden in the person of Jesus Christ - now revealed to all mankind. At this very moment of me preaching to *you*, Jesus Christ is preached across the world to almost every people group - missionaries are risking their lives, sacrificing their comfort to tell people in other countries about this Jesus - the Jesus that they experienced personally as the one who died for their sins and rose to new life. The wisdom of God is seen in Jesus rising to new life 3 days after being crucified and then promising US new life - a life alongside Him in His Father's home in Heaven. THIS is the wisdom of God.

 **When we grieve, we can either run from God or run to God. We can get closer or further. Let your grief and questions bring you closer to the One who knows, cares & has promised a better place!**

SALVATION CALL / PRAYER

// LIFE GROUP Discussion Questions

1. Question 1 When in your life did you question the goodness of God because of the grief you were in?
2. Question 2 What are the lies Satan tells us when we suffer (physical or emotional) pain?
3. Question 3 What are some of your favorite scriptures that promise God's eternal plan?
4. Question 4 How did God reveal His goodness in the midst of grief?
5. Question 5 Who is someone that you know at work that could use the hope of heaven?