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Week 3 – Why Does God Allow Suffering?

Introduction: When we ask why a loving God would allow evil and suffering, we are admitting to some core assumptions...

Five Core Assumptions:

1. There are indeed objective _____ in life
 - *To ask the question is to agree that good and bad exists objectively*
2. There is _____ in the universe
 - *To ask the question is to assume there must be an ultimate "cause"*
3. People are supremely _____
 - *To ask the question is to admit that humans have the highest value*
4. Life really is _____ living
 - *To ask the question is to acknowledge that life is a hopeful endeavor*
5. We are _____ of finding and profiting from answers
 - *To ask the question is to assume there is a higher purpose to life itself*

Roman Proverb: When the sailor does not know which port he is heading for, no wind is the right wind.

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” **(Genesis 50:20)**

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” **(John 10:10)**

Conclusion - Romans 5:12-18

We inherited the fallenness of the first Adam, but we also inherited the favor of the Last Adam, reversing the curse of sin.

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS AND PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Personal Life:

1. According to the Bible, suffering is an unavoidable reality of the fall of creation. However, some would say this seems to be of little help in the midst of severe trials. Would you agree or disagree and why? Discuss...

Ponderings:

2. The story of Joseph was mentioned in the weekend message. What other familiar "suffering stories" are you aware of in the Bible and have any of them given you help or hope in the midst of hardship? Discuss...
3. Some of our suffering is brought into our lives through little or no fault of our own (Joseph, Job, Ruth, etc.) while others things are consequences of our own choices (Abraham, David, Solomon, etc.).

Is it more difficult for you to trust in God's compassion for you when you've brought suffering upon yourself as opposed to when it's not your fault? Share your thoughts about this...

4. Thinking through the five assumptions discussed in the weekend message, are there any you would take issue with? Discuss...
5. What is a promise or passage of the Bible that is particularly precious or encouraging to you...something that has helped you persevere through hard times? Be honest. If your experience with the Bible thus far has NOT brought much hope to your journey in life, share about that as well...

Promptings:

6. If you are willing conclude your life group experience with raw honesty by sharing at least one thing you are suffering with right now. Ask for prayer from your group. The problem could be spiritual, emotional, mental, physical, relational, etc. No judgment allowed – only confidentiality, safety and prayer...