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## WEEK 7

# WHERE IS GOD IN SUFFERING?

### OBJECTIVE

The reality of life is that we've either experienced suffering, we are suffering right now or we will suffer in the future. No matter which one of these seasons your group members are in, we remember that God the Father is ABOVE US, God the Son has gone BEFORE US, and God the Spirit is WITH US.

### CHECKLIST

- Pray over each group member by name.
- Prepare for those that you may not know have suffered or are suffering. Ask the Lord to reveal and go before your group meeting to allow your group to really come around one another as you head into this week's group meeting.
- Send out mid-week text to check in with Small Group members.
- Ensure your group members have all the information they need for your Serve Experience for Week 9.
- Invite group members to bring any questions from last week's topic.
- Remind group members of upcoming Next Steps opportunities (Baptism, Connect, etc.).
- Select someone to share their story next week.

### SMALL GROUP

#### SOCIAL: 10 MINUTES

Welcome the group and create connections for group members to one another.

#### ICEBREAKER: 5 MINUTES

Have you ever broken any bones? If so, how did it happen? If not, have you had any other injuries?

#### STORY: 3 MINUTES

At least a few days in advance, ask one person from the group to share their story of what their life was like before Jesus and when they made the decision to follow Jesus. (Be sure to hold them to a 3-minute limit!)

#### INTRODUCTION: 5 MINUTES

Remind attendees of the purpose of this group and the importance of their (and your) commitment to it. Celebrating any milestones or next steps of individuals in the group.

Allow participants to share their thoughts on the previous week's devotional and encourage them to ask any questions they had written down regarding last week's topic.

"How did you see God move through you this week through your devotions?"

"What questions did you write down?"

#### VIDEO: 15 MINUTES

Set up and prepare for this week's video teaching.

"We are building on each week and this week is going to help each of learn how to be there for one another and how others can best help you if you are going through a season of suffering. Let's lean into the video, and then we can dive into the questions for today."

#### READ: 2 MINUTES

Open your Bibles together and read through this week's passage. Be sure that everyone is able to find the book, chapter and verses and encourage group members to take turns reading.

*Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

*2 Corinthians 4:16-18*

#### DISCUSSION: 30 MINUTES

Lead the group through the reflection questions, encouraging them to even ask their own questions. (This is not the time for the leader to talk, but for participants to engage with each other. Rule of thumb: you talk 30% of the time, they talk 70% of the time.) Be sure that no

one or two people dominate the conversation, but you're facilitating and directing the participation of everyone.

#### QUESTION 1

Have you ever seen someone go through suffering while at the same time responding with, "God you are so good?" How has that inspired you and your faith?

#### QUESTION 2

As you look at your suffering experience(s), what was revealed to you about your character? What did you learn about God's character?

#### QUESTION 3

Who in your life is currently going through a time of suffering? How could you reach out to them this week and encourage them?

#### QUESTION 4

Have you ever put together a playlist of worship songs that you could use to prepare for a time you may or will go through suffering? What would it feel like to begin to worship God now before the suffering?

#### PRAYER: 15 MINUTES

Split into groups of two and pray.

Prayer Focus: Spend time sharing if you are going through or have gone through suffering. Let the person pray over how God might reveal to you the goodness and mercy's He gives us each day. If you are not going through suffering, pray now for how you will respond and be given the strength to go through suffering and come out closer to God on the other side.

#### NEXT STEPS: 5 MINUTES

Introduce the materials and encourage members to engage in their weekly devotions for the coming week. Discuss any upcoming events or opportunities for them to take next steps (attending worship experiences, baptism, Rock City Connect, serving beyond our walls).

- Share specifics of the Serve Experience for Week 9.
- Encourage group members to reach out to a friend who is going through suffering or who has gone through suffering, encouraging them to use God's Word to encourage their friends in this time.