



GOD QUESTIONS  
LifeGroup Study  
“How Can God Allow all this Evil and Suffering?”  
May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Evil and suffering are a common problem people have with God. On a philosophical level, skeptics ask, “How can there be a God with all the evil and suffering in the world?” For some this question gives cause to reject God. On an experiential level, we all wonder, “How could God allow this to happen?” “Why wouldn’t God do something to stop this?” There are no easy answers to these questions, but in our wrestling with the reality of evil and suffering there is the example of Jesus. He is the One who suffered and died, the One who carried the sin of the world on his shoulders. As we dig into this difficult topic, allow God to speak to your heart about how to respond as you experience evil and suffering.

**ICBREAKER:** What challenge do you remember facing in elementary school? Maybe you found yourself attending a new school where you didn’t know anyone, or maybe you experienced a challenging class or assignment. Share this challenge with your group. What did you learn from that challenge?

**MEMORY VERSE:** *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, to that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”* 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

**STUDY:**

VIDEO LINK: God Questions Part 3. Ravi Zacharias – “Belief in God through Time of Suffering”.

[www.lifegroupleaders.ca/studies](http://www.lifegroupleaders.ca/studies)

VIDEO NOTES Use the following as a reference as you watch the video.

“Virtue in distress and vice in triumph has made atheists of mankind.” John Dryden

Ravi's story of suffering –

Lost his mother in his 20s and his dad 5 years after his mother passed.

Back injury in the 1980s – psychologically and emotionally debilitating.

### How do we Respond to the Question of Suffering and Evil?

1. We must evaluate our assumptions behind the question. Are they accurate?

C.S. Lewis “No question has been fully comprehended until it has been fully posed and its assumptions understood.”

University student objection to Ravi – With all the evil in this world there cannot be a God.

Ravi's response:

- When you say there is such thing as evil aren't you saying there is such thing as good?
- There must be a moral law to differentiate between good and evil
- If you assume there is a moral law, you must assume a moral law Giver
- There is no absolute morality without God.

2. What has ultimately brought evil and suffering in this world is our departure from God.

- Sin is a violation of God's purposes for us and our world.
- The ripple effect of our sin impacts all of us in the form of suffering and evil.

G.K. Chesterton – When belief in God becomes difficult, the tendency is to turn away from Him, but to what?

Two examples for us in our suffering

1. Hymn writer, Annie Johnson Flint - The Making of the Beautiful – Rowland Bingham

He Giveth More Grace

1. He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;  
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,  
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.
2. When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.
3. Fear not that thy need shall exceed His provision,  
Our God ever yearns His resources to share;  
Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing;  
The Father both thee and thy load will upbear.
4. His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,  
His power no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

2. Ravi's story of grace in suffering.

Book recommend – Why Suffering? – Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale

God works on a time table. He didn't come for Lazarus when they wanted Him to come for Lazarus – why? – *“This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for **God's glory** so that God's Son may be **glorified** through it.”* John 11:4

“When you're looking for someone to be mentored or discipled, look for someone who has suffered much and whose faith has remained unshaken.”

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

For this part of your study, we'll focus on three big ideas that can help to sustain us in our suffering.

### **1. There are Logical Reasons to Move Toward God, not away from Him, in our Suffering**

At the beginning of his talk, Ravi quotes author, John Dryden, "Virtue in distress and vice in triumph has made atheists of mankind."

John Dryden seemed to be saying that It is human nature to become virtuous when we are suffering, in hopes that God will come to our aid. But when times are good, we go to our vices and live "like we really want to". Whatever we say we believe about God, if we live this way, we show that really we are living as if we don't believe in God.

- Do you think John Dryden was right? Why or why not?

We must evaluate our assumptions behind the question. Are they accurate? To set up this argument, Ravi gives 4 statements to help us to think logically about the question of God, suffering and evil.

- a. If there is such a thing as evil there must be such a thing as good
  - b. There must be a moral law to differentiate between good and evil
  - c. If you assume there is a moral law, you must assume a moral law Giver
  - d. There is no absolute morality without God.
- Why is it important to evaluate our assumptions when it comes to questions about God, suffering and evil?
  - Does suffering generally draw people to God or move them away from Him? Why do you think this is?

### **2. The Stories of Others Can Help Sustain us in our Suffering**

- How did the story of Annie Johnson Flint impact you?
- How might her hymn lyrics help you in your own suffering?
- Ravi, in sharing his own story, said, "God works on a time table." What did he mean by this? How does this idea help you see God's timing in terms of your own suffering?

### 3. The Scriptures Help Sustain Us in our Suffering

READ: 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

- Paul writes, *“He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.”* v. 4 NLT. How does God use our suffering to help us comfort others? What practical examples can you think of?
- Paul shares that he and his companions suffered, *“... that we might not rely on ourselves but on God ...”*. How have you experienced a growing reliance on God in your suffering?
- Paul writes *“On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers.”* Ultimately, when we suffer, we can choose to put our hope in God. We may never know the “why” but we can know “Who” we can hope in. What does it look like to set our hope on God when we are suffering?

#### PRAYER

Spend time now praying for one another. Particularly, ask God to grow your hope in Him and your awareness of how to come alongside others who are suffering.

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