

QUESTIONS ABOUT *Suffering*

1. Suffering is all around us. People suffer in many ways. Can you think of some examples?
2. Does it ever bother you that people suffer? If so, explain why.
3. Sometimes suffering results from our own foolish behavior. Can you think of some examples?
4. Sometimes our suffering involves things that God cannot or will not prevent. Can you think of an example?
5. Sometimes our suffering can actually be a blessing. Can you think of an example?

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Instructions:

Take each question one by one and have the students write down their answer, then discuss the question with the entire group.

Observations:

1. Suffering is all around us. People suffer in many different ways. Can you think of some examples?
 - Physical illnesses
 - Lack of food, shelter and clothing (third world countries, storm or earthquake victims)
 - Emotional pain from past mistakes or injuries
 - Wounds from troubled or broken relationships (breaks ups, troubled marriages, divorce)
 - Grief over the death of a loved one
 - Disappointment with friends who let you down
2. Does it ever bother you that people suffer? If so, explain why.
 - I don't think it bothers us when people suffer as a consequence of their own foolish choices.
 - But what about the child who suffers and dies from hunger in a third world country? What about a faithful Christian who dies of cancer and leaves behind three little kids? Why do bad things happen to good people?
 - I know that we cannot explain everything about suffering, but there are some things we can know because the Bible explains it for us.
3. Sometimes suffering results from our own foolish behavior. Can you think of some examples?
 - II Samuel 11-12. David commits adultery with Bathsheba and murders her husband to cover it up. David suffered greatly because of this sin (II Samuel 12:10-15). However, his suffering was the consequence of his foolish choices.
 - Sometimes people get mad at God for suffering that is actually their own fault. For example, they may suffer with health problems and even die young because they abuse their bodies with drugs or alcohol. While this is sad, their suffering is actually the consequence of their foolish choices.
 - Sometimes people must suffer with a difficult spouse because they rushed into marriage or ignored the warnings of family and friends.
4. Sometimes our suffering involves things that God cannot or will not prevent. Can you think of an example?
 - A woman may grieve because her husband is not a Christian, or perhaps he was a Christian and turned from the Lord. While God may open doors for this man to hear His word, He will not force the man to become a Christian.
 - At other times people get angry with God because loved ones die. However, death is an unavoidable part of life (Hebrews 9:27). All men must die, and do die. It's odd that this would make us angry with God.
5. Sometimes our suffering can actually be a blessing. Can you think of an example?
 - II Corinthians 12:7-10. Satan was afflicting Paul with a thorn in the flesh. We don't know what it is, some kind of suffering causing him tremendous pain (v. 7).
 - Paul asked three times for God to take this away (v. 8). God did not remove the thorn, but gave Paul the strength to endure.
 - Ultimately, Paul came to see the benefit in his thorn. It helped to keep him humble (v. 7). It also helped him depend on God's strength, which only served to make him stronger (vs. 9-10).
 - Although this thorn was sent by Satan to harm Paul, God used Paul's thorn for his good.
 - He can do the same thing for us. Always look for the good that can come from your suffering.