



LIVE JESUS

MINISTRIES

2024 LJM Teen Topic: *Why does God let bad things happen?*

Have you ever struggled with the fact that God allows bad things to happen? Have pain, suffering, evil, illness, death, natural disasters or other types of pain or suffering ever caused you to become angry with God, doubt His goodness, or even doubt His very existence?

CONTENT REFERENCES (Mentor Prep Video: (watch 6:40-40:40) <https://series.northpointministries.org/prepared/good-god>

St. John Paul II: "Suffering is one of those points in which a person is in a certain sense 'destined' to go beyond themself. Each person is called to this in a mysterious way."

C.S. Lewis: "Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Paul Claudel: "Jesus did not come to explain away suffering or remove it. He came to fill it with his presence."

Book of Job: The book of Job, the classic text on suffering, does not end with a resolution to the problem, but the longest person-to-person encounter & dialogue between a human being and God found anywhere in scripture. No amount of human consolation will out-do suffering, only a personal encounter with the living God.

Rm 8:18-25: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For (all of) creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.

1. Why do you think God, who is often referred to as the *Creator or Love Itself*, would allow pain and suffering to exist in the world?

Note: Allow your small group to come up with answers on their own before you propose your thoughts...

2. If God had a button that would remove everything bad in the world, everything that causes pain and suffering, what would happen if He used it?

Have you ever done anything bad before? How about the people you love: have they ever done anything bad before? How about the weather, the ocean, fire, or air itself? The reality is that everyone (and everything) we love, including ourselves, would be gone. Perhaps one of the reasons that God does not remove all that is bad in the world is because He does not want to get rid of you. (use spray can analogy from mentor prep video here)

3. If God predetermined for the worst evil history would ever know to be committed against Himself in the crucifixion, what might this event (His passion, death, and resurrection) tell us about the relationship He desires to have with us and the purpose of pain and suffering?

It reveals that only through an act of suffering could God who is infinitely perfect in Himself, truly reveal the depth of his love for us. Perhaps the purpose of pain and suffering is to open us up to relationships in a way no other experience can... Perhaps without suffering, we would never know the depths of love...

Cornerstone Statement: *Human suffering is something we will never be able to fully comprehend because it is wrapped up in the **mystery** of God's Glory. Yet, isn't it true that the most impactful times of growth in our lives almost always take place during times of suffering? One thing we do know for sure is that through the crucifixion, Jesus knows how we feel when we experience pain and suffering. Perhaps suffering serves as a reminder for us that we were not made to live here forever, but somewhere else... Maybe suffering exists so we can choose God and experience Love freely before spending eternity with Him in Heaven, where there is no more pain or suffering... Maybe earthly suffering plays a much bigger role in our salvation than we think.*

Create A Group Commitment Going Forward: (Ask them first - small commit - only choose one if needed)

Ideas: (1) Reflect on a past suffering and see what good came from it in the long term. (2) When pain, suffering, or something bad comes your way this week, choose to believe that God will not waste it. (3) Spend silent time in a Church looking at a crucifix to remind you that God knows how you feel. (4) Read the Psalms.

Closing Prayer: Pray Romans 8:18-25