

God Suffers Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. How have you been sleeping this past week?
2. What is one of your go-to comfort foods?

Read the following passages: Hosea 11:1-11; Isaiah 53:1-12.

Questions for Discussion:

One of the most surprising realities revealed in the Scriptures is that God suffers. More specifically, God suffers because of his people; God suffers with his people; and God suffers for his people. We human beings suffer for many reasons including the unjust acts of others, our own bad decisions, and the general circumstances that go along with living in a broken world. But God suffers because he loves us.

1. In what ways have you found yourself suffering due to events taking place in our nation? What about circumstances in your family or personal life? Read Psalm 34:18. As you have suffered, has God seemed near to you or far from you? Explain. What can we do to experience God's nearness when we are suffering?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:21-26. Have you been willing to suffer with a brother or sister when he or she is suffering? If so, what has this looked like? Explain. Can you think of a time when another person helped you when you were suffering? Explain. What did that person say or do that you found particularly helpful (either later or in the moment)?
3. Although some ancient Israelites might have understood the suffering servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 to be Israel, or a faithful remnant of people within Israel, why do you think Jesus' followers saw this passage as a reference to Jesus? What does it mean to you personally that Jesus suffered on the cross for you? Does Jesus' life and death help you process the suffering you experience in your life? Explain.
4. What are some ways we may have to suffer in order to walk together as a diverse spiritual family? Why do you think most churches in the United States, even in areas with diverse populations, do not have diverse congregations (by diverse, we mean no one racial or ethnic group constitutes more than 80% of the congregation)? What are some potential benefits of being part of a diverse spiritual family?
5. What is one thing you can do to better love the people in your spiritual family?

Pray