

Victory Over Evil 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. Describe a time when you got in trouble as a child.
2. Do you spend more time thinking about the past, the present, or the future? Explain.

Read the following passage: Psalm 3.

The Bible meets the subject of evil head on, not just abstractly, but in the lived experiences of generations of human beings. Evil was not a theoretical concept for the psalmists. It was their reality. If we approach the biblical texts as outside observers, we may find some of their responses to evil to be a bit jarring. In Psalm 3, David asks the Lord to strike his enemies on the jaw and to break the teeth of the wicked. Other psalms go much further. What should we make of this?

To begin, God clearly does not need us to sanitize our language when we come to him in prayer. We should cry out to God in the middle of our suffering, our pain, and the injustice we experience with all the emotion we can muster. Because David did this, he was able to show surprising restraint in his interactions with his adversaries.

In addition, David never lost confidence that God would deal with evil. God is just, and David recognized that wickedness would be punished. But exactly how God did this was a surprise to almost everyone. “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” (Romans 5:6) Because of the cross, we can receive forgiveness from a just God and extend forgiveness to those who sin against us.

Questions for Discussion:

1. When you are suffering, do you find it difficult to remain confident in the goodness of God? In your life, is God’s goodness just an abstract divine quality you acknowledge or a reality you regularly experience? Explain. What are some ways God has been good to you?
2. Do you think you have a tendency to expect little from God so that you won’t be disappointed? Explain.
3. Why do you think we have a tendency to feel ashamed when we are the victims of someone else’s evil behavior? What are some key components of your identity that you think God wants you to keep in view?
4. Do you think you have pain in your life that you are hiding from rather than dealing with? How can we tell when this might be the case? Why do we do often bury our pain? How can the Psalms help us with this?

5. Read Matthew 10:29-31. What does Jesus teach here about God's providential control of the universe? How can this help us deal with fear?

6. Read Isaiah 53:4-6. This passage comes from one of Isaiah's mysterious "servant songs" (note Isaiah 52:13). This servant "took up our pain" and "was pierced for our transgressions." These powerful words suggest two important redemptive components to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Firstly, Jesus absorbed the pain and suffering we experience because of evil in this world (including the evil done to us), as the Gospel of Matthew observes in Matthew 8:16-17. Therefore, we can go to the cross of Christ for healing. Secondly, Jesus took the punishment we deserve for the evil acts we have performed. Therefore, we can go to the cross for forgiveness. In this way, the cross is our ultimate answer to the evil done to us, and the evil living in us. Have you experienced the healing and forgiveness found in the cross of Christ? Explain.

Pray