

SMALL GROUP GUIDE FOR

10/10/2021

Introduction

- When life is going well and there seem to be blessings all around us, it is easy to praise God and believe the scripture that says “All good things come from God.” But when we start to suffer, even a little, we start to question what is going on. Did we do something wrong? Is God punishing us? When the suffering becomes worse, a devastating death in the family, loss of employment for an extended period of time, or others, we can easily make the comment “Where is God when I am suffering?”, thinking God has somehow abandoned us. But we find that God is typically right next to us – in the guise of a neighbor, a Sunday school class, a small group.

Discussion

- Have you ever known someone, or have you yourself, even been through a time that you would classify as *suffering*?
- During that time, did you, or a friend who was going through the trial, ever question the presence/absence of God?
- What was the result of that questioning?

Going Deeper

- During the holocaust. There was a story of a Jewish community that “put God on trial” and found Him guilty of abandoning His people. The history of the Jewish people as found in the Old Testament shows numerous occasions when they questioned God’s presence when going through extended periods of suffering like the various exiles, enslavement in Egypt, and famines. The Christian history has some of these moments as well.
- But Jesus promised in his last words on earth – “*surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age.*” (Matt.28:20) If we believe these words of Jesus, then how do we ever question whether or not God is with us in suffering?
- Part of what may be making this difficult is that we either expect that as a believer we should not suffer or that God will somehow manifest Himself to us in the form of an angel or other theophany to rescue us. Are those expectations realistic? Are they biblical?

Application

- Truth is that sometimes God does appear and rescue us, sometimes provides a miraculous escape. But most often God “appears” in the form of US – believers – who come to our rescue *in the name of Jesus* – out of a sense of calling as a disciple of Christ. It is God who has entrusted His world and His people to the Christian community. WE are the re-presentation of God to those in this world who are suffering. Remember that the next time you see someone suffering and are moved to help. And remember the next time someone comes to help you through a time of suffering – they were sent by Christ!