

What Do We Believe?

Lesson 33

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Lesson 33: Evil and Suffering: God's Part

Scriptures:

Genesis 3, 6:5; Psalm 40:1, 2; 46:1-3, 7, 10, 11; 139; Proverbs 18:10, 24; Isaiah 55:6-21; Matthew 9:35, 36; 10:28-31; Luke 7:11-15; Romans 5:3, 4; Hebrews 5:8

Lesson Goals:

To assist the learner to understand God as a just God who must punish sin
To assist the learner to see that Jesus revealed God's response to suffering
To assist the learner to understand that God suffers with us

Scripture Memory:

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

The Lesson:

Every day we read in the newspaper, see on TV, or view on the internet, stories about people who are murdered, suffer from some awful disease, are hurt by something like a tornado or fire, or do some terrible thing that hurts or kills someone. There are many stories of evil and suffering every day.

Many who are Christians, and many who are not, ask the question, "If God is all-powerful and if He loves everyone, why does He permit evil and suffering in the world?" It is not wrong to ask the question. It is wrong to assume that there is an answer for every question humans can think up. Finding an answer to this question that will satisfy everyone is probably impossible because every time we find an answer, it raises another question.

The first and most important response to the question is that God is much greater than we are. He thinks and acts in ways that are too complex for our human minds. He has reasons for being like He is and doing what He does that we can't fully understand. It may seem to some that God is keeping secrets, but to others, it indicates that His ways are above our ways. (Isaiah 55:8, 9)

When Adam and Eve chose to sin, they did so with the understanding that it would cause death. Because humans have free-will, there is always the potential of repeating that rebellion against God's will. Suffering is the result of human sin, and evil comes from the mind of humans. Storms, earthquakes, and other natural disasters take place because the perfect world that God provided for Adam and Eve was flawed by their sin.

God told Adam and Eve that they were to be responsible to care for all creation. When they failed to follow God's plan, the worst result happened. That continues to be true today. If humans followed God's plan, loved one another, and cared for His creation, most of the evil and suffering would vanish.

The best way we can understand God's concern about human suffering is to study the life and work of Jesus. Jesus healed sickness of every kind. He had such sympathy that He even raised some from the dead. He always helped people who were suffering.

Pain and suffering came into the world because, though God created a perfect world, both the world and humans were created with the potential for sin. Had He not done that, humans would be nothing more than robots. We would have no choice but to love God.

There is not a specific statement in the Bible about why, though God could make it go away, evil and suffering continue to exist. What we do know from God's Word, and the life of Jesus, is that God suffers

with us. He bears our burdens. He is with us in the suffering. When Jesus died on the cross, He took on Himself all the sin of all humans for all time. He literally suffered with us.

So, when you, or someone you know, hurts, or when you sin, you can be sure that God is with you. The great God of the entire universe is right with you. He knows all that you experience. God stays with you. Even if no one else is there, God is there.

Life Application:

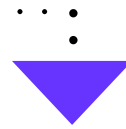
God created the world to be a wonderful, perfect place. If you have lived very long then you know that this world is no longer that same place. The original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden has changed that. Sin and suffering entered the world and it has forever been changed. Sin has marred that beautiful world and us, just as clay is sometimes marred on the potter's wheel.

As we have seen in previous lessons, God is Creator and Sustainer. He brought the world, and us, into being and He keeps it from being destroyed. The Bible tells us, though, that it is being reserved for fire until the day that God will create it anew. (2 Peter 3:7) There, believers will live with Him, the way He desired us to from the beginning. Until then, God has made a way for us to be in a right relationship with Him NOW! God sent His one and only Son into this sinful world. He did it, so that Jesus could live a perfect life and die a death that would pay the debt owed by each one of us for all of our sin.

Psalm 46 says that "God is our place of safety. He gives us strength . . . He is like a fort." What better place to run for safety than a fort! "The name of the Lord is like a strong tower. Godly people run to it and are safe." (Proverbs 18:10 NIV) Don't you want safety? Will you come to Him? Will you do it now? "Turn to the Lord before it's too late. Call out to Him while He's still ready to help you." (Isaiah 55:6 NIV)



Planning for Lesson 34
Evil and Suffering:
Christian Response



- ◆ **Memory Verse Activity** - As you review the memory verse for memorization, take the verse apart and discuss it in detail. For example: “What does it mean to be ‘pierced through?’” “Why was Jesus ‘pierced through?’” “How was Jesus ‘crushed?’”, etc.
- ◆ Provide pictures of the original sin in the Garden of Eden, a tower (Proverbs 18:10), and Jesus’ death on the cross.
- ◆ If you have access to Michael Card CD’s, his album *Ancient Faith* includes the song “Search Me and Know Me” from Psalm 139.
- ◆ Encourage any artists in your group to illustrate Psalm 139 or Proverbs 18:10.
- ◆ Sing “You Shall Go Out With Joy,” “The Battle Belongs to the Lord,” “A Might Fortress,” “This is My Father’s World” especially verse 3, “I Waited for the Lord,” “God is our Refuge,” and “Create in Me a Clean Heart.”
- ◆ **Dig Deeper:** Read Psalm 139. Discuss God’s love and care for us. Make a list of those things that cause suffering. Conclude your discussion with verses 23-24—our response.
- ◆ **Dig Deeper Still:** Read Jeremiah 18:1-8. Talk about the potter. Share other potter stories or analogies that you might have. Discuss how God is our potter.

**But He was pierced through
for our transgressions,
He was crushed
for our iniquities;
The chastening for our
well-being fell upon Him,
and by His scourging
we are healed.**

Isaiah 53:5

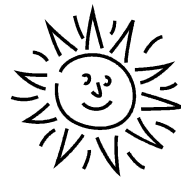
MATCHING

Read Psalm 139. Match the picture with the correct verse.

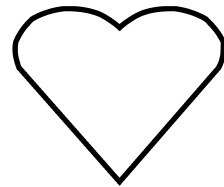
Psalm 139:1

1, 2, 3 . . .

Psalm 139:13-15



Psalm 139:4



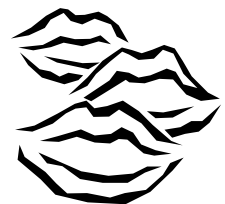
Psalm 139:9



Psalm 139:16



Psalm 139:17-18



Word Search



S S E N S U O E T Q U I R R D T H
 W K W G O S P I E R F P E E E E T
 O D O O G O M E R D L I H C C M U
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 N O I Q A M A L F N E S S R I D T

But He was _____ through for our _____,
 He was _____ for our _____;
 The _____ for our well-being _____,
 and by His _____ we are _____.
 _____ 53:5

Word Search



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U	O	U	E	T	I	L	P	T	S	P	E	R	H	V	C	B
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I	E	C	H	A	S	T	E	N	I	N	G	W	S	R	A	N
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I	R	I	E	H	H	A	I	A	S	I	A	I	V	L	T	M
T	O	F	S	A	L	K	C	I	T	M	P	S	O	E	G	A
N	O	I	Q	A	M	A	L	F	N	E	S	S	R	I	D	T

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