

St Mary's Fetcham, Surrey
Sun 16th Oct 2011

HOT POTATOES # 1

Why does God allow suffering?

Scripture

Isaiah 55:6-11

Luke 22:39-46



Sermon outline

- 1) Uniqueness of the Christian perspective on suffering
- 2) The consequences of human freedom
- 3) A God who suffers
- 4) God's restoration plan:
 - Here on earth
 - Eternally
- 5) Sharing in God's sufferings:
 - With reliance on God
 - With one another

The sermon will be accessible from the St Mary's website:

www.stmarysfetcham.org.uk

Resources for further reading

Plan B	Pete Wilson
Where is God when it hurts?	Philip Yancey
The one big question	Michael Baughen
The problem of Pain	CS Lewis
When God weeps	Joni Eareckson Tada
If I were God I'd end all the pain	John Dickson
Searching issues	Nicky Gumbel
Finding peace in life storms	Charles Spurgeon

Suggestions for Home Groups

Overleaf are some optional questions for discussion in groups.

Please do not attempt to discuss them all in one meeting: we suggest 3 or 4 max!

It will be important to set aside time to pray for individual needs.

Some groups may like to listen to music together, for example: When I survey the wondrous Cross; There is a green hill far away; The Lord's my Shepherd; Here is love vast as the ocean [type title into <http://www.youtube.com/>]

Please do speak to Paul, Marion or Richard if you have anything you would like to discuss. Tel: 01372 375000

Why does God allow suffering?

1. Do you see differences between pain and suffering? If so, in what ways?
2. What does the idea of human freedom contribute to an understanding of suffering?
3. Would you prefer a God who intervenes in our lives to stop us making a mess of things? What might be the consequences of such intervention? (e.g. would there be any benefit to being good?)
4. Isaiah 55:8-9 says that God's ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts than our thoughts. How do you respond to God not giving you answers to all your questions?
5. What difference does the cross make to your perspective on suffering? What does the message of the cross mean to you in your daily lives?
6. Can suffering be God's punishment for our sins or only something God allows but does not intend? (See for instance John 9:1-5; Luke 13:1-5)
7. Paul says in Romans 8:18 that the suffering we experience here is not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us. Do you associate with this? Does the concept of eternity make a difference to how you view suffering?
8. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. Have you experienced this comfort or been able to empathise with others through your own suffering? How?
9. Rick Warren says that God is more interested in your character than your comfort. When suffering comes what are you most interested in? How can we see suffering from God's perspective? (e.g. James 1:2-4)
10. How do you typically respond to situations of someone else's suffering that you can't control or where you feel powerless? (eg. do you work harder, organise more, run away, overeat, lean on God?)
11. How can we know when to resist suffering as "an alien intrusion into God's world" and when to accept it as something which God is using in our lives?