



WEEK 3 - WHY DOES GOD ALLOW PAIN AND SUFFERING?

MESSAGE BIG IDEA

While God does not provide the reason for each experience of pain, through Jesus he does provide a way to face suffering with hope and courage rather than bitterness and despair.

SCRIPTURE

Habakkuk 1:1-4, John 16:33

ICE BREAKER

Share a story where you've experienced physical pain; maybe a broken bone, sprained ankle, or cracked tooth. In that moment, what brought you comfort?

OPENING THOUGHT

Today's question, "Why does God allow pain and suffering?" is one of the hardest because it's not just an intellectual question; it's one that impacts us personally through our pain and the pain of those we love. We feel this question, which makes navigating it difficult. The goal is not to solve the issue of pain and suffering but to wrestle with the question honestly and openly. As we discuss the topic, try to avoid common, yet often unhelpful responses like "Everything happens for a reason" or "You just need to pray harder".

BIBLE DISCUSSION

1. Read Habakkuk 1:1-4. What stood out to you? What "misery" comes to your mind as you read this? How does acknowledging all the pain and suffering in the world make you feel?
2. Read John 16:33. What stands out to you? What emotions does this passage evoke?
3. Compare the two verses. How are they similar? What makes them different?

LIFE APPLICATION

4. Everyday we are bombarded with media telling us we deserve to be happy. How do you think that affects our ability to navigate the pain and suffering in our lives? In what ways do we avoid feeling the weight of pain in our lives? In what ways might sheltering people from pain cause more harm than good?
5. Karma says, "If I am good, I will be rewarded, and if I am bad, I will be punished." The Christian tradition is about grace, which says, "you don't get the punishment you deserve, and you receive the love you didn't earn." What difference would it make to have a mindset of grace instead of karma? How would this impact your self-talk during a time of suffering?
6. In our fast-paced world, we often don't make room for the slow process of healing and restoration. Widows used to wear black for an entire year to symbolize their grief process; now we provide three days of bereavement pay. How does the expectation to be OK influence our ability to heal and be restored? Where in your life do you need permission not to be OK now? How can you give that permission to others?
7. Often our pain and suffering can feel isolating. Just like Habakkuk, we cry out, "where are you, God?" Author Tim Keller writes "It can't be that (God) is indifferent or detached from our condition. God takes our misery and suffering so seriously that he was willing to take it on himself" as Jesus. How does that influence your understanding of God?

CHALLENGE

Invite God to reveal himself to you in the trials you are facing. Pray this prayer, "God, if you are real, make yourself real to me in my pain and suffering." Pray this prayer daily over this next week with an expectation of seeing God at work.