



November 6, 2016
Job 12 – 38
“God and Suffering”
Pastor Gary Hamrick

According to a recent survey, the most perplexing question that people have for God is, “Why is there pain and suffering in the world?” For some, this question causes them to doubt the existence of God, and for others, this question causes them to doubt the goodness of God. So how are we to face the reality of a world filled with pain and suffering? The book of Job addresses the question of suffering from a few different vantage points. The topic for today’s study is: God and Suffering – Where is God in my suffering?

The Existence Of God

1. The reality of pain and suffering in the world has caused some to question the existence of God.
2. Pastor Gary said: “Suffering to some seems more compatible with a non-existent God than with an all-loving God... Because there is obvious pain and suffering in our world and in our lives, [some consider this to be] more evidence for the absence of God. Because, after all, if there was a God, why would he seemingly stand idly by while all these terrible things happen to people in the world?”
3. Pastor Gary posed these questions to help us think about pain and suffering from a different perspective:
 - a. What if evil exists apart from God?
 - b. What if God truly exists, but the perfect world he created and intended for us was tainted and spoiled a long time ago, when mankind first rebelled against him?

- c. What if it's true that when mankind rebelled against God, that mankind opened the floodgate of all the things that are in our world that were not originally intended to be part of the world, including things like death, disease, crime, betrayal, murder, and all kinds of inhumanity, evil, suffering, etc.?
 - d. What if it's true that we are all affected in some way because of mankind's rebellion against God?
 - e. What if, God knowing all of this, put into motion a plan that would redeem us from this messy world, and in the meantime, he would be there to help us through our own suffering and pain, while we wait for the ultimate redemption?
 - f. What if God truly exists and he is the only one who can help us through our suffering?
4. Like the complexity of the universe, some things are simply too great to fathom.

The Goodness Of God

5. The reality of pain and suffering in the world has caused some to question the goodness of God.
6. "Would you agree that the difference between us and God is greater than the difference between us and, say, a bear? ... [Imagine] a bear in a trap and a hunter who, out of sympathy, wants to liberate him. He tries to win the bear's confidence, but he can't do it, so he has to shoot the bear full of drugs [tranquilizers]. The bear, however, thinks this is an attack and that the hunter is trying to kill him. He doesn't realize that this is being done out of compassion. Then, in order to get the bear out of the trap, the hunter has to push him further into the trap to release the tension on the spring. If the bear were semiconscious at that point, he would be even more convinced that the hunter was his enemy who was out to cause him suffering and pain. But the bear would be wrong... I believe God does the same to us sometimes, and we can't comprehend why he does it any more than the bear can understand the motivations of the hunter. As the bear could have trusted the hunter, so we can trust God."¹
7. Pastor Gary said: "Our finite minds lack the ability to always understand what God is up to or why he allows what he does, but our lack of understanding should not cause us to believe in the lack of God's goodness."

¹ *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* by Lee Strobel.

8. Job made 19 “What if?” statements, some of which Pastor Gary highlighted.
 - a. **Job 31:5** – *“If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit.”*
 - i. Basic translation – “I am not a liar nor am I a deceiver.”
 - b. **Job 31:9** – *“If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor’s door...”*
 - i. Basic translation – “I haven’t been lustful and am I not a peeping Tom.”
 - c. **Job 31:13** – *“If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me...”*
 - i. Basic translation – “I haven’t been unjust.”
 - d. **Job 31:17** – *“[If] I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless...”*
 - i. Basic translation – “I am not selfish.”
 - e. **Job 31:19** – *“[If] I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment...”*
 - i. Basic translation – “I haven’t been uncaring.”
 - f. **Job 31:24** – *“If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, ‘You are my security...’ ”*
 - i. Basic translation – “I haven’t been greedy.”
 - g. **Job 31:31** – *“[If] men of my household have never said, ‘Who has not had his fill of Job’s meat?’*
 - h. **Job 31:33** – *“[If] I have concealed my sin as men do, by hiding my guilt in my heart...”*
 - i. Basic translation – “I don’t have any unconfessed sin in my heart.”
9. **Job 31:35** – *“Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense – let the Almighty answer me...”*
10. The “Almighty” definitely answered Job’s request for a hearing!
 - a. God asked Job 77 rhetorical questions in chapters 38–41.
11. Pastor Gary said: “[**Job 38** is] the most comprehensive survey of creation in [the] Bible!”
12. Creation and the vastness of the universe speak to the largeness of God and the limitations of man.
13. **Job 40:15–17** – *“Look at the behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox. What strength he has in his loins, what power in the muscles of his belly! His tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are close-knit.”*

- a. This Scripture probably refers to a Brachiosaurus, not a hippopotamus.
 - i. Dinosaurs lived at the same time as human beings.
 - ii. Dr. Carl Baugh discovered human prints next to dinosaur prints along the Paluxy River in Glen Rose, Texas.²
14. **Job 41:1** - *“Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope?”*
- a. This Scripture probably refers to a dragon, not a crocodile.
 - b. **Isaiah 27:1** - *“... Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea.”*
15. **Job 40:24** - *“Can anyone capture him [the behemoth] by the eyes, or trap him and pierce his nose?”*
16. **Job 40:2** - *“Can you put a cord through his [the leviathan] nose or pierce his jaw with a hook?”*
17. We can't tame that which is untamable.
18. We can't control what is uncontrollable; we simply need to trust God.
19. Pastor Gary said: “What God is basically saying to Job is this: ‘If I am Sovereign over all the universe, holding the things of this universe in my hand, [then] I can hold you and the pain and the season of suffering you’re going through, in the palm of my hand as well. And if I know your pain like I’ve known the formation of the earth - because I created it - and if I see your pain, like see the stars that I have named one by one, and flung into outer space, then please know that I am not absent. I am not silent. I am with you.’ ”

Resting And Trusting In God

20. “If God were small enough to be understood, He would not be big enough to be worshipped.” - Evelyn Underhill³
21. God is our strength.
 - a. **Psalms 28:7** - *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped.”*

² <https://answersingenesis.org/dinosaurs/footprints/paluxy-river-tracks-in-texas-spotlight/>

³ <http://quoteaddicts.com/515074>

22. God is our comforter.
- a. **2 Corinthians 1:3-5** - *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows."*
23. God is our deliverer.
- a. **Psalms 18:2** - *"The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."*
24. God is our healer.
- a. **Isaiah 53:5** - *"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."*
25. God is our peace.
- a. **Ephesians 2:14** - *"For he himself is our peace..."*
26. God is our hope.
- a. **Colossians 1:27** - *"To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."*
27. God is our refuge.
- a. **Psalms 46:1** - *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."*
28. "We want to avoid suffering, death, sin, ashes. But we live in a world crushed and broken and torn, a world God Himself visited to redeem. We received his poured-out life, and being allowed the high privilege of suffering with Him, may then pour ourselves out for others." - Elisabeth Elliot ⁴
29. **Isaiah 53:3-5** - *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering... Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows... But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."*

⁴ <http://www.christianquotes.info/quotes-by-author/elisabeth-elliott-quotes/>

30. Pastor Gary said: “Jesus, himself, understood sorrow and suffering, and he understands [ours] too. When we don’t know what to make of our suffering, we look to the only one who can comfort us through it. David said, ‘Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior,’⁵ and sometimes that’s the only prayer we can pray. [God] is faithful. He will never leave us nor forsake us. He is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. He is all these things⁶ and more. And so, in the midst of your own pain and suffering, look to the Lord. Trust him and ask him for his help.”

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Job 38:1-11](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. If you could ask God one question, what would it be?
4. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they doubted the existence of God. (See #2 above)
5. Use Pastor Gary’s questions to initiate conversation about looking at pain and suffering from a different perspective. (See #3 above)
6. Read and discuss the illustration from Lee Strobel’s book, *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity*. (See #6 above)
7. How have you experienced the presence of the Lord in difficult times? (See #19 above)
8. Spend time read and discussing the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared concerning the ways the Lord ministers to us. (See #21 through #27 above)
9. Read Pastor Gary’s remarks about Jesus to prepare the people in your group for prayer. (See #30 above)
10. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

⁵ [Psalm 38:22](#)

⁶ Pastor Gary was referring #21 through #27 in his outline.