



## How Can a Good God Allow Suffering?

John 11

### Discussion Questions September 3, 2017

1. Share some of the ways suffering takes shape in our world, and in our individual lives. If you feel comfortable, share some of the ways suffering has touched your life personally.
2. How can the reality of suffering make belief in the Christian God difficult in our modern, Western world?  
  
\*\*\* Read John 11:1-44, then answer the following questions.
3. How are Mary and Martha experiencing suffering in this passage? Are there any other ways the depth and reality of suffering show up in this passage?
4. How does Jesus respond to the news of Lazarus' sickness and death? Does anything surprise you about how Jesus responds?
5. Now focus on John 11:4-5 and 11:25. How does this perspective that Jesus shares influence how we should approach suffering?
6. Jesus didn't just raise Lazarus from the dead after Lazarus' own sickness and suffering. Shortly after this episode, Jesus Himself experiences tremendous suffering at the hands of others – ultimately leading to His crucifixion and then resurrection.
  - In what ways does Jesus' own suffering — and His victory over that suffering - add meaning to how we understand God in relationship to our suffering?
  - In what ways does Jesus' suffering provide a perspective that helps us respond well to suffering?
7. Are there ways you've seen God work in your suffering? Stated another way: are there ways God's presence and activity have shown up in the midst of suffering? Explain your answer.
8. How does God's presence and activity in the midst of suffering shape the way you approach the painful experience of suffering?
9. Now read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. What truths in this verse can help sustain followers of Jesus Christ in the midst of suffering?
10. Now go back to the question we're asking: "How Can a Good God Allow Suffering?" What have you learned that can help you start to put together a response?
11. Responding to suffering is rarely an academic, abstract exercise. When you see others suffering, what practical ways can you show care and love to those experiencing suffering?
12. Challenge: Memorize 2 Corinthians 4:17-18: 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.