

# Confronting Christianity

## Week #2

### Small Group Notes

#### Introduction:

Ice breaker: What's one of the saddest stories you've seen in the news recently?

*This week we are going to look at probably one of the most common criticisms against Christianity: "How could a God of love allow so much suffering?" Skeptics and critics will often cite foreign, far-off examples from a philosophical approach. But what about when suffering is really personal? Even as Christians, we often don't see a problem with the existence of God, His sovereignty or His goodness until we actually have something happen to us, or someone else. The problem of evil/suffering is a complicated subject. That's why there's a whole book in the bible dedicated to it. Job is a long book – 42 Chapters. Encourage your group members to take time to read the whole thing in their own time. Today we will focus on the highlights.*

#### Discuss:

##### 1. Job 1

Explain: In chapter 1 we are introduced to a man named Job. Job was not perfect or sinless but he was righteous and even offered up sacrifices on account of his children. The reader is privy to an interaction that takes place between God and Satan that Job knows nothing about. For unexplained reasons, God is speaking with Satan and brings up Job, commending his devotion. Satan criticizes Job's faithfulness by saying that he is only worshiping God because things are going well. It is here that the story gets even more difficult as God approves of Satan request to attack Job in various ways. Satan does everything he can, short of killing Job, to destroy him.

Ask: 2-3 Discussion questions related to the content.

- ❖ **How would you respond to critics who ask if God is good, then why is there evil and suffering?**
- ❖ **Have you ever struggled with that criticism yourself? In what way?**

- ❖ **Think back over a time in your life when you faced a seemingly insurmountable challenge. What predominant emotions did you feel during that time?**
- ❖ **At the time, how did you think God felt about your situation? What did you think He was doing?**
- ❖ **Does the discussion between God and Satan in Job Ch1 bother you? Why or why not?**

## 2. Job 2

Explain: Satan took away every possession Job had, both things and family. Despite this, Job stays faithful to God: “Blessed be the name of the LORD” (1:21) But in Chapter 2, God gives Job’s body to be put under Satan’s power, again with one exception: “only spare his life” (2:6) Job still holds fast his integrity but in (v.9) we see one of the biggest dilemmas in all of scripture. Although the reference to Job’s wife is very brief, the content of her speech is significant. When it comes to evil and suffering, we must choose: We can either “curse God” (accuse him of wrongdoing) or worship God.

Ask: 2-3 Discussion questions related to the content.

- ❖ **Read Job 1-2. How would you describe God’s part and Satan’s part in Job’s suffering? Does God “allow,” “cause,” or have no part in tragedies? Why do you say so?**
  - *Read Job 2:9-10. Job was not sinning in what he said.*
- ❖ **What’s the first thing you usually do when something goes wrong? When have you experienced tragedy?**
- ❖ **Why was Job’s wife speaking foolishly?**
- ❖ **What does Job do instead of taking his wife’s advice?**
  - *Look back at 1:20-21. Job grieved over his pain. But rather than shaking his fist angrily at God, he fell to the ground in worship.*
  - *Job responds to his wife with a measured rebuke. He warns her (as well as himself and us!) from speaking against God’s goodness and sovereignty.*

## 3. Job Overview (ch.3-42)

Explain: If we ask, “What kind of God allows evil and suffering?” we must remember that God has given us a 42-chapter book. Studying Job is a

journey that will take time. But for the sake of limited group time, try to sum it up. The rest of the book deals with Job and the dilemma that his wife and his friends present to him. Their speeches and rebuttals go back and forth and are filled with dark worship and lament (See Ch.3), with wrestling between faith and doubt, wrestling with the idea of sin and innocent suffering, and what it means to question God. Job argues with his wife, he argues with his friends and he wants to argue with God but doesn't know how. He needs a mediator (9:32,35). At the end of the book God finally breaks the silence and speaks to Job out of a whirlwind. (Ch.38-42)

Ask: 2-3 Discussion questions related to the content.

- ❖ **Read some of Ch38. How would you summarize the point God was making through the repeated use of these questions?**
  - God is not only sovereign, good (even when it is hard to believe) and wise, He is also so infinitely these things that it is beyond our ability to comprehend.
  - There are some things we can't know.
- ❖ **Instead of asking "why does God allow evil?" What are some better questions to ask?**
  - *Am I God? Do I know all things? Am I in control or should I even be? Etc.*
- ❖ **How do you feel about the fact that nowhere in the book does God explain to Job about the conversation between God and Satan or about why Job is suffering?**
- ❖ **How does Job point to Jesus?**
  - (See 9:32,35).
  - *Job went through innocent suffering. (In other words, although he was not sinless, he did not do anything specifically to deserve what he went through. This points to Jesus who went through the ultimate innocent suffering.)*
- ❖ **How does understanding how Jesus suffered encourage you personally?**
  - Explain: Even in our suffering and struggles there is hope because of Jesus and His suffering, death and resurrection. Paul teaches of the comfort that is also ours in Christ Jesus. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Close:

**This has been a tough topic. How can we be praying for one another?  
How can we encourage one another this week?**