



## Group Life Leader's Discussion Guide

Date: 4/13/2025

Sermon Title: Wrestling with Doubt Week 6 – Why do the innocent suffer?

Scripture: Matthew 27:45-50

### Gathering:

As you gather with one another be sure to greet each other and check-in. Ask and inquire from group members how their week has gone? Share that we will close with prayer requests at the end of group today.

**OPENING PRAYER** (Group leader or someone prays this prayer to open or create a similar prayer.)

*Gracious and compassionate God, we gather today with hearts full of questions, doubts, and hope. As we reflect on the suffering of Jesus and the struggles of the innocent, give us eyes to see Your presence in our pain and ears to hear Your still, small voice speaking peace. May this time deepen our faith, even when answers feel far away. Teach us to trust Your heart when we cannot trace Your hand, Amen.*

### Opening Question:

1. When you were a child, how did you respond to things that seemed unfair or wrong? How do you respond now?

### Digging into the scripture texts:

2. Read Matthew 27:45-50 together. What words or phrases stand out to you? Why?
3. What does Jesus' cry on the cross in verse 46 say to you about His experience of suffering?
4. How does it impact you that Jesus—who was without sin—felt abandoned by God? Have you ever experienced a moment where you cried out to God, asking "Why?" How did you feel in that moment?
5. In Job 1:20-22, Job does not accuse God but worships in grief. How is that similar or different from Jesus' cry in Matthew?
6. Romans 8:18-28 talks about suffering and God working through all things. What hope do you hear in this passage?
7. According to Wesleyan theology, grace is always at work—even in suffering. How might God's prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace be present in times of pain?
8. The cross is a symbol of unjust suffering, yet it is also the place of the greatest redemption. What does that paradox teach us?

### Sermon Questions:

9. The question of "why God" is a common and a question that most struggle with as some point in life. How have you made sense of "why do the innocent suffer"?
10. The sermon mentions different theological approaches to suffering (authoritarianism, naturalism, free will/relationship). Which of these resonates most with you? Why?
11. How does the image of Jesus crying out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" impact your understanding of God's relationship to human suffering?

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12. A quote in the sermon was from Leslie Weatherhead, she said, "The will of God is always directed to our good, and when it does not seem to be so, it is because we are either deceived or in too much pain to see clearly." Have you had so much pain, suffering, hurt that you could not see the love of God?
13. Dr. Oliphant said, "God suffers with us when we suffer", what hope, or comfort does this offer you?
14. The sermon suggests that God's answer to suffering is a relationship, not an explanation. How do you feel about this? Is it comforting or frustrating?
15. God is with us, always. When in your life have you seen God being with you through times of doubt, struggle, uncertainty, and suffering?

**Insights from *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith* chapter 6:**

16. Rev. Hamilton writes on page 155, "*Most of all, God promises that suffering does not have the final word.*" What are your thoughts on this? Do you agree or disagree?
17. What else from your reading of chapter 6 that you would like to share with the group?

**Applying it:**

18. How can we live faithfully even when we don't have all the answers?
19. In what ways can we, as individuals and as a faith community, embody God's presence for others who are asking 'why' in the midst of their pain?
20. How does the Easter story, from Palm Sunday through the crucifixion to the resurrection, inform your perspective on suffering and hope?

**CLOSING PRAYER** (Be sure to share any prayer requests or praises and have someone close in prayer.)

*Loving and present God, You are no stranger to pain. In Jesus, You walked through the darkest valley, and You know what it means to cry out in grief. Thank You for not leaving us alone in our suffering. Help us to trust that You are still working in ways we cannot see, redeeming what is broken and breathing life into what seems lost. Strengthen our faith, hold our doubts, and help us walk alongside others with compassion and grace. Amen.*

**WAYS TO RESPOND (or challenges for you this week)**

1. Identify someone in your life or community who is going through a difficult time. Find a tangible way to show them God's love and presence (e.g., a meal, a thoughtful note, an offer of help).
2. Spend time reflecting on Psalm 23, focusing on the image of God walking with us through the "valley of the shadow of death."