

TALKS

Saturday morning: *“Wrong Views of Suffering”* Mark 4:35-42 (NIV)

Saturday evening: *“The Healing Community: A Safe Place for Sufferers”* Job 42:7-17 (NIV)

Sunday morning: *“Praising God through the Pain”* 1 Peter 1:3-9 (ESV)

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Friday evening discussion:

1. The theme of the retreat is finding God in our suffering. How do you feel about exploring this topic?
2. What are the main questions you ask when you contemplate the problem of human suffering?
3. To what degree do you feel equipped to minister to a suffering person? What do you think would help you feel more equipped?

Saturday morning discussion:

1. Do you need any clarification on anything from David’s talk? Is there anything in particular that struck you?
2. As the storm rages, the disciples doubt whether Jesus really cares about them (v. 38). Have difficulties ever led you to question God’s love for you? Explain.
3. How can suffering Christians be sure that God loves them?
4. Where do we see Christ’s weakness in this passage? Where do we see his power? What do these two factors teach us about his identity?
5. How might our knowledge of both Christ’s weakness and his power be a source of comfort to someone who is suffering?
6. Jesus asks the disciples why they do not yet have faith (v. 40). In what ways, in the last year, have you experienced the struggle between faith and fear?

Saturday evening questions:

1. Review together: What do you know about the book of Job?
2. What do you think are some unhelpful things to say to a person who is suffering? What would be a helpful approach toward a person who is suffering?
3. What can congregations do to make their churches feel like safe places for people who are suffering?
4. To what degree do you feel safe sharing your pain with others at Emmanuel?

Sunday morning discussion:

1. Do you think suffering makes it more difficult or less difficult to turn to God? Explain your answer.
2. 1 Peter 1:4 talks about our inheritance in heaven. How frequently do you think about heaven? Do you think a Christian can focus on heaven too much? Explain.
3. Do you believe that God will only allow suffering into his people's lives if it is necessary (v. 6)? What purposes might God have for allowing difficulties into a believer's life? Is God's purpose for our suffering always clear to us?
4. What hymn or Christian song do you find meaningful to sing when you are going through a difficult or painful time?

Sunday morning personal reflection:

1. Does anything stand out as a particular insight or lesson from this weekend? Did you learn anything new, deepen in understanding something, get a sense God is showing you something?
2. Did you get a sense there is a particular area in your life where you need to grow? Is there something you need to give attention to or devote time to?
3. Do you need to plan any sort of follow up? Are there questions or difficulties that were raised, and who can you speak to that can help you with them?
4. How can you start to live differently this week given something you learned or experienced this weekend?