

Road to Emmaus

Counseling Those Experiencing Trials and Suffering **(Student Notes: 9/21/19)**

Introduction: Rick Elzinga (rick@southwesthills.org)

A. How to counsel someone who is suffering:

Q: What is the first thing you should do?

1. Lead with humility and tears

-[Prov 14:10]

-[Romans 12:15]

-Do you have the gift of tears? (If not, pray for it!)

2. Assure them that you will walk with them and pray for them through the grief process, and that God is with them too.

[Heb 13:3]

3. Teach them that God has given us two “cables” to hold on to so we won’t lose our balance when suffering: God’s sovereignty and God’s love/goodness.

-Q: How do you help someone trust God? [Psalm 9:10]

4. Direct them to the encouragement of scripture [Romans 15:4] and to prayer [James 5:13]

-Job, 1Peter

5. As the opportunity arises, explain [Romans 8:28-29]

-Timing is key—[Prov 27:14]

-But also explain how he is using the suffering in their lives to make them like Jesus[2Cor 7:10-11]

6. Ask questions to understand—not just what they are suffering (their circumstances)—but how they are struggling in those hard circumstances.

7. Be sensitive to the biblical reasons God allows or causes suffering, and guide your counselee accordingly.

[Jas 1:2-5] Context of suffering

What are the biblical reasons for suffering?

a. So that we will hate and turn away from sin and foolishness

[Romans 8:22-23]

[Heb. 1:9] 1Peter 4:1; Luke 13:1-5

[Psalm 119:67]; Heb 12:5-11

b. So that we will grow spiritually and be rewarded.

[Romans 5:3-4; James 1:2-4]; 2Cor 4:17

c. So that we will become humble and learn to depend on God more.

[2 Cor 1:8-9; 12:7]; Ps 119:71

d. So that Christ can show his power in our weaknesses and be glorified.

[2 Cor 12:8-10]; 4:10-11

e. So that we can better minister to others and empathize with them (and fulfill God's purpose for our lives—Eph 2:10).

[2 Cor 1:3-4]

f. So that our faith will be proved genuine and be strengthened.

[1 Peter 1:6-7]

[Job 1:9-11]; 2:3; 23:10

g. So that we will see our need for each other in the church.
[1 Cor. 12:26]

h. So that the gospel will advance among unbelievers and believers.
[Phil. 1:12-14]

i. So that we will better understand and identify with Christ's sufferings, appreciate those sufferings, and know Christ better.
[1 Peter 4:13; Phil 3:10; Heb 12:3]

j. So that we will long for Christ's return and the new heaven and earth.
[2 Thess 1:6-7; Romans 8:23; 2 Peter 3:13]

k. To redirect us.
[Gal 4:13]

l. For God's own mysterious reasons.

8. Remind them that Satan also has a purpose for our suffering: to get us to not trust God, to paralyze us from ministry, to tempt us to sin.
[Jas 1:12-13]

9. Remind them of the truth of [Romans 8:35-37]—that because of God's love, we can be more than conquerors when we suffer.

10. Remind them that God will not give them more than they can handle if they are depending on him.
God's grace is sufficient [2 Cor 12:8-9; Heb 4:16].

11. Remind them that suffering should be expected in this life [1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:9-10]

12. Remind them that our focus should not be to get out of our suffering but to glorify God by growing through it.

13. Remind yourself that ministering to someone who is suffering is an opportunity to help them move forward in their Christian life: trust in God, commitment to Christ, greater wisdom, progressive sanctification. So watch for God to work in the counselee's life (and remember to tell them what you are seeing).

B. If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?

Although theologians struggle to answer this question in a complete and satisfying way, we can be assured of several facts:

1. Suffering is a temporary state of the world because of human sin. God did not create this world with suffering (except for pain), nor will there be suffering in the new creation.
2. Much suffering is against God's will on one level, but according to his will on another level. God gives humans choice, and we often choose to sin.
3. God did not stay distant from suffering, but he joined us in suffering to redeem suffering.
4. God is always sovereign, loving, and wise; and he will bring good out of our suffering. He will make us more like Jesus through suffering.
5. Suffering is only hopeless if there isn't a final Judgment by a just God.

C. Resources

-Jerry Bridges "You Can Trust God" (booklet)

-Robert Jones' booklet on suffering

- 1) enhance relationship with God
- 2) experience the sufferings of Christ
- 3) exposing our remaining sin
- 4) engaging with God's people
- 5) exhibiting God's work
- 6) equipping us to minister
- 7) elevate our longing for heaven