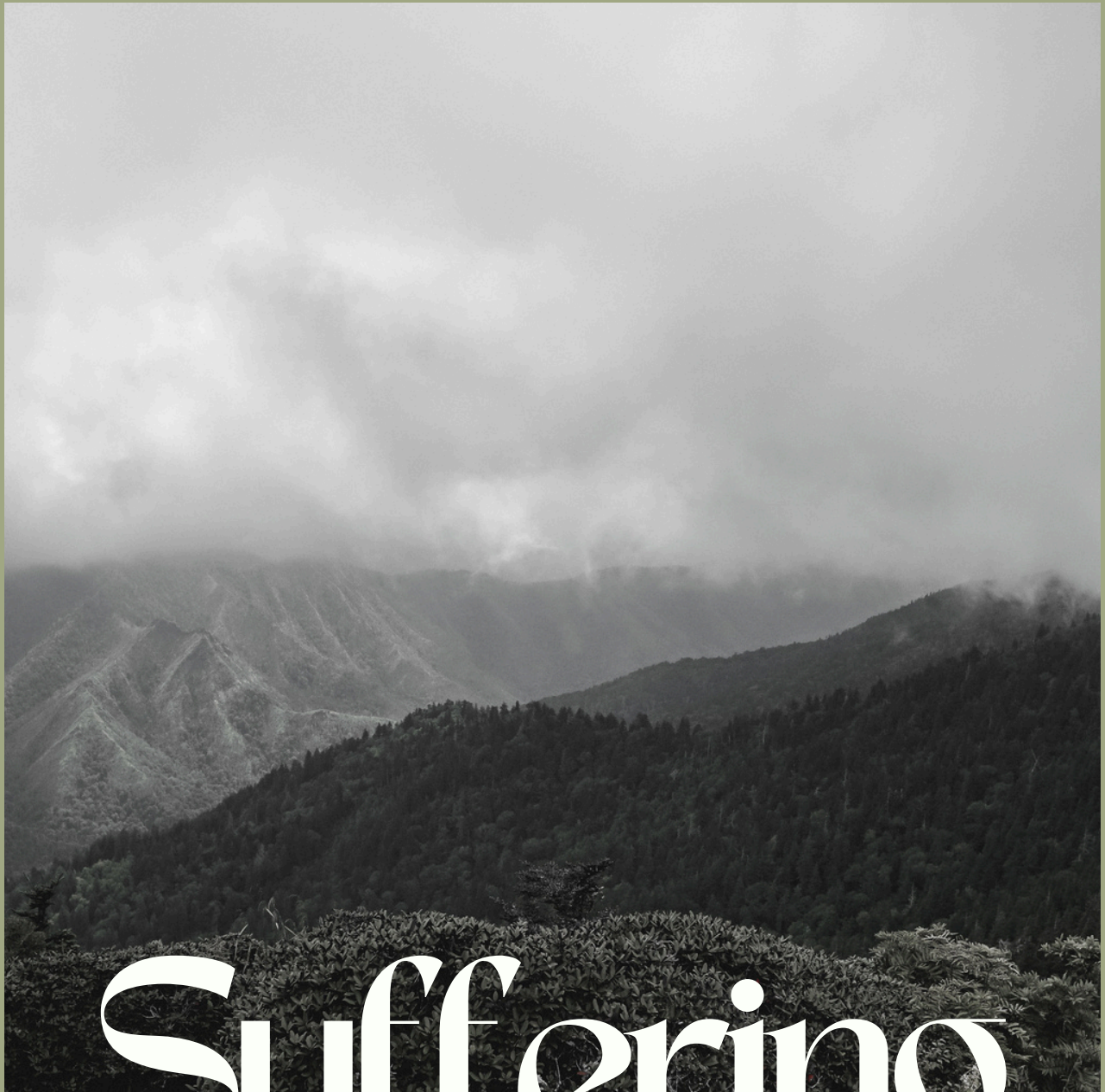


THE GOODNESS OF GOD

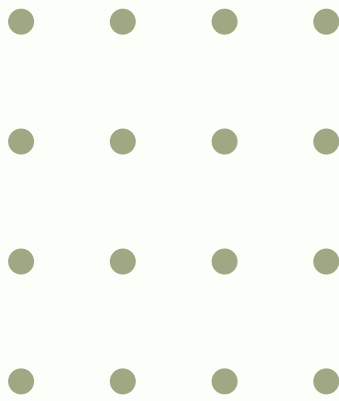
VISION 2024



Suffering

A STUDY AND PRACTICE GUIDE
FOR HOMEGROUPS

generations
church leipzig



Week 4

HOMEGROUP RESOURCES

Helping others in suffering

Let's come together as a group and begin with a time of prayer.

Group Questions:

- Can you recall a time when someone helped you when you were struggling?
- What things have been unhelpful when you were struggling?

Today, we will explore how Job's friends came to support him during his time of suffering. Their conversation spans chapters 4–37 and comprises the majority of the book of Job. While I strongly recommend reading it for yourself, since it covers such a significant portion of the book, we will highlight and summarize some main points in their conversation and discuss who these friends are.



Jobs Friends

Eliphaz the
Temanite

Hailing from Teman, renowned for its wisdom, Eliphaz is depicted as a mystic (Job 4:12–16).

Bildad the
Shuhite

As a sage and traditionalist, Bildad brings a conservative perspective to the dialogue (Job 8:8).

Zophar the
Naamathite

Zophar is characterized as a rationalist, emphasizing logical thinking and analysis (Job 11:1–2).

Elihu, the son
of Barachel
the Buzite, of
the family of
Ram

Likely a fellow countryman of Job, Elihu's lineage is traced back to Buz, adding depth to his connection with Job's situation (Job 32:2).



Job 2:11-13

The passage from Job 2:11-13 illustrates a poignant moment in Job's story, where his three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, respond to his profound suffering. Upon hearing of Job's troubles, they embark on a journey to sympathize and comfort him. Their response is deeply empathetic; upon seeing Job from a distance, they are overcome with emotion. They weep loudly, tear their robes as a sign of mourning, and sprinkle dust on their heads as a gesture of grief. This visual display of mourning reflects their genuine sorrow for Job's plight.

For seven days and seven nights, they sit with Job in silence, a powerful demonstration of solidarity and support. Their silent presence speaks volumes, acknowledging the magnitude of Job's suffering and offering him companionship in his darkest hour. This act of sitting with Job in silence is a profound expression of empathy and compassion, providing him with the comfort of knowing that he is not alone in his pain.

Breaking the silence

As Job breaks the silence in Chapter 3, he expresses his deep anguish and despair by cursing the day he was born. His emotional outburst reflects the depth of his suffering and the turmoil within his soul. In subsequent chapters, Job engages in a series of dialogues with his friends, each offering their perspectives on his suffering.

Eliphaz, the first to speak, suggests that Job's suffering is a consequence of his own actions, implying that he is reaping what he has sown. Bildad, following Eliphaz, attributes the tragedy of Job's children's deaths to their sins, reinforcing the notion of divine retribution. Zophar, in turn, believes that Job deserves even more punishment, adding to the weight of Job's burden.

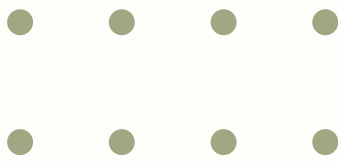


Advice

Later, Eliphaz speaks again, accusing Job of great wickedness and implying that his suffering is a result of his own wrongdoing. Throughout these exchanges, Job defends himself against his friends' accusations, expressing frustration with their lack of understanding and empathy. He challenges their simplistic explanations for his suffering and asserts his innocence.

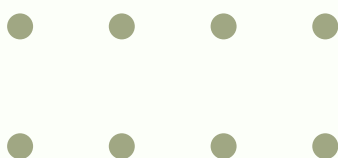
Finally, Elihu, a fourth friend, enters the conversation with a fresh perspective. He expresses anger toward Job and his friends, criticizing them for their failure to provide a satisfactory explanation for Job's suffering. Elihu contends that Job's words lack wisdom and insight, adding rebellion to his sin.

Job expresses his disappointment in his friends' attempts to comfort him. He criticizes their lengthy speeches and argues that if the roles were reversed, he could offer better comfort and encouragement.



This passage highlights Job's deep sense of isolation and frustration as he grapples with his suffering and seeks solace from his friends.

I have heard many things like these;
you are miserable comforters, all of you! Will
your long-winded speeches never end?
What ails you that you keep on arguing? I
also could speak like you,
if you were in my place;
I could make fine speeches against you
and shake my head at you. But my mouth
would encourage you;
comfort from my lips would bring you relief.
Job 16:2–5 (NIV)



Discussion Questions

1

Have you ever sat with someone who was suffering? What did you talk about?

2

What did these friends of Job do well?

3

What did they not do well?

4

What would you have done differently in this situation?

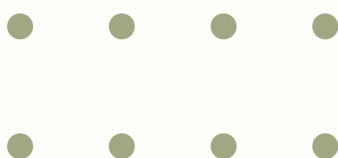
5

Read together Job 42:7–9



After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: “My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. 8 Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

Job 42:7–9 (NIV)



Discussion Questions

1

How difficult is it for you not to assume the worst about people when they are in a time of suffering?

2

How does this dialogue between Job, his friends, and God help give you perspective and insight on how to be there for your friends?

3

Next time someone is suffering, how do you want to be present during their time of pain?

“

When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving much advice and solutions, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand. ~ Henri Nouwen

”

The Practice



Day One

What are the things we need to consider when we sit with someone who is suffering? Let's start with ourselves.

- Why do we want to help our friend?

It's important that we examine our hearts and motives before engaging in helping our friend. Here are some questions to help you do a personal heart check:



Personal heart check

1

Am I genuinely considering what is best for them?

2

Am I doing this because I want to appear good?

3

Am I acting out of love for this person?

4

Am I content if this person never shows gratitude for what I do for them?

5

Am I willing to endure pain with them?

6

Can I handle it if they respond to me out of anger because they are hurting?

Personal Questions

We don't want to be like Job's friends who came with their assumptions of what Job needed. We need to take time to reflect on what our friend might need. Use these questions to help you analyze the situation

1

How does your friend react when you ask them about the situation they are going through? (For example: are they reserved? Are they open? Are they emotional? Are they numb?)

2

What boundaries have they set up around this situation? (Things they don't want to discuss or subjects that seem triggering or touchy.)

3

How do they respond when you offer them help?

Reaching out

Sometimes when people are suffering, they desire to recluse and avoid people altogether. But don't let this stop you from reaching out. Often, we have to wait before people are ready to accept help or comfort from us. We can be faithful by regularly reminding them that we are available when they are ready, but also not applying pressure as we wait. It is important that their needs are our focus and not turning it back to us wanting to just do good works for people. We don't want to make people who are struggling or suffering feel like they owe us something because we are trying to do something nice for them. It is a free gift for them to receive or to decline. If you don't think you can have this mindset, it is better not to offer anything at all until you have the right perspective and heart in serving your friend.

Take time to pray and ask God to help you know what steps to take in supporting your friend who is suffering.



Day Two



Read Mark 2: 1–12

1

What did the friends do in this story?

2

How committed were they to their friend?

3

What does it look like to bring someone before the Lord today?

4

Who is a friend you need to bring before the Lord? Devise a plan to help your friend.

5

What are some things that could hold you back from implementing your plan?

6

How can you overcome those things?

Do it! Come next week ready to share about what happened.

Day Three

We've discussed extensively about helping others, but there's another aspect we need to address: what if we are the ones who are suffering? How open are we to letting other people help us? There's a gap in our thinking when we only believe we should help others but never accept help for ourselves. If everyone thinks this way, no one will ever accept help, and everyone will always be offering help. So why is there a disconnect? Sometimes fear holds us back from letting people into our most vulnerable moments, afraid that they will hurt us even more while we are in this vulnerable state. Sometimes it's pride – we don't want to be seen as weak and in need. Or we are afraid we won't be able to control ourselves.

- What is it that is holding you back?

Take time to pray and bring these things to the Lord.



Make a list



- Who can you open yourself up to?

- Who can you ask for help and why?

- What are some boundaries you need to establish in order to feel comfortable enough to open up?

- How can you discuss these boundaries and needs with your friends?

- How could this benefit your life right now?

Group Questions

1

Who is a friend that you can carry this week in prayer?

2

End the night by praying for your friends who are suffering and who the Lord puts on your heart.





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