

Expect to Experience God Together in Community (*Approximately 30 minutes*)

If needed, invite brief introductions. Share check-ins and pray together, asking God to speak through the conversation and through his Word.

Icebreaker: “What Went Wrong?”

Setup: Ask the group to imagine arriving home and discovering that the living room floor is covered with water. You can see the damage, but you do not yet know what caused it.

Ask For/Offer several possible explanations:

- Someone left a faucet running.
- A pipe burst inside the wall.
- A storm damaged the roof.
- Someone deliberately flooded the room.
- No one can determine the cause.

Discuss:

- How would knowing the cause change your response?
- Why do we feel such a strong need to explain suffering?
- What happens when no explanation seems adequate?
- What could you know with certainty even if you could not explain every detail?

Call it out: suffering raises both intellectual and personal questions. We want to know why evil exists, but we also need to know whether God can be trusted when we suffer.

If you don’t want to do the icebreaker, choose one Conversation Starter:

1. What experience has made suffering difficult for you to understand?
 2. When people suffer, what conclusions do they commonly draw about God?
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Transition

“If God is good and all-powerful, why is there so much suffering, disease, and tragedy?”

Genesis 2 and 3 take us back before disease, violence, grief, and death entered human experience. God created humans for life, relationship, purpose, and freedom under his loving authority.

Asking For a Friend – The Problem of Evil (Genesis 2 & 3)

August 16, 2026

Unfortunately, those same humans rejected God's authority. That rebellion is sin.

That sin broke every relationship: with God, with one another, with ourselves, and even with creation itself. While the details in Genesis do not explain why God allowed every tragedy, they do reveal why the world no longer works as God originally designed it.

Suffering is more than an intellectual puzzle. It is a deep wound common to the human experience but uniquely personal whenever it is inflicted. Suffering leaves people wondering whether God is good, present, and trustworthy.

Expect to Encounter God in His Word *Approximately 45–50 minutes*

Background *Read in advance and share briefly as helpful.*

Moses, in Genesis 2, described the good world God gave humanity. God provided life, abundance, meaningful work, relationship, and freedom within a loving boundary.

He continued (in chapter 3) to describe humanity's rebellion. The serpent attacked God's Word and character, suggesting that God had withheld something good and implied that he could not be trusted. The man and woman distrusted God and chose to define good and evil for themselves.

Their rebellion brought separation from God. What followed: shame, fear, blame, alienation, pain, and eventually, death. Yet God sought them, covered their shame, and promised that the woman's offspring would ultimately defeat the serpent. Judgment fell, but grace had already been set into motion.

Read and Discuss God's Word Together

God Created a Good World *Approximately 12–15 minutes*

Read Genesis 2:7–9, 15–18, 21–25 aloud. Discuss:

- What did God provide for humanity?
- What purpose, freedom, and boundary did God establish?
- What characterized humanity's relationship with God and one another?
- What does this passage reveal about God's original intention for human life?

God's world began with generosity, life, order, relationship, and meaningful freedom. Evil was an intruder, not an ingredient in God's design.

Humanity's Rebellion Fractured God's World *Approximately 18–20 minutes*

Read Genesis 3:1–13, 16–19 aloud. Discuss:

- How did the serpent distort God's Word and character?
- What did the man and woman believe they could gain by disobeying God?
- What immediate effects followed their rebellion?
- How did sin affect their relationship with God, one another, their work, their bodies, and creation?
- How does the Fall help explain the suffering we experience today?

All suffering exists within a world broken by humanity's rebellion, but a person's particular suffering is not necessarily punishment for a particular sin.

The first temptation began with the suspicion that God could not be trusted. Humanity reached for independence and received alienation.

God Responded with Judgment and Mercy *Approximately 12–15 minutes*

Read Genesis 3:15, 20–24 aloud. Discuss:

- What future conflict and victory did God announce?
- How did God care for the man and woman while judging their rebellion?
- What signs of mercy do you see in this painful passage?
- How does God's promised victory reshape the way you view suffering?
- Where has pain made it difficult for you to trust God's goodness?

God did not abandon his broken creation. He pursued people who hid from him, covered their shame, and promised a Deliverer who would defeat the serpent.

Bring It All Together

Choose one or two questions as time permits:

- How does Scripture answer the claim that suffering proves God is cruel or powerless?
 - What questions about suffering do these chapters answer? Which questions remain?
 - How might God be inviting you to trust him without having every explanation?
 - Who needs you to represent God's compassion through your presence and practical care?
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Expect to Experience God Through Faithful Response

Approximately 10 minutes

Suffering feels wrong because it is wrong.

God created humanity for life with him. Sin brought death, corruption, and separation into his good creation. Every diagnosis, betrayal, disaster, injustice, and death reminds us that the world is no longer what God made it to be.

But Genesis 3 did not end with evil winning.

God sought people who hid from him. He covered their shame and promised a Deliverer who would crush the serpent. Jesus entered our fallen world, bore sin's judgment, defeated death, and will restore creation.

Invite each person to choose one faithful response for the coming week:

- **Trust God's character:** Refuse to measure God's goodness only by circumstances you cannot explain.
- **Bring God your pain:** Speak honestly with him instead of hiding your questions or grief.
- **Move toward someone who is hurting:** Offer compassion, prayer, presence, or practical help.
- **Trust the promised Deliverer:** Remember that Jesus has defeated death and will restore creation.

Close by praying for those who are suffering, asking God to deepen the group's trust in his goodness and make them faithful expressions of his compassion.

Before leaving, confirm the time, location, and preparation for the next gathering.