

John 9:1-5 Sermon-Based Discussion Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To explore our own responses and undergirding beliefs about suffering.

Icebreaker Suggestion: Consider watching again the “Blame” video by Brene Brown as a group. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZWf2_2L2v8

Have you ever found yourself blaming someone you shouldn’t have been blaming?

Transition: Brene Brown’s point is that we blame people to try to gain control of our lives. In his sermon, Keith said that that psychological studies show that we want to believe suffering is the person’s fault who is suffering. This is what Keith called a “deep-seated psychological defense” that we use to try to bring control, to bring meaning to the reality of suffering and evil. But, is this instinct the way we should respond to suffering?

Discussion

1. Everyone has likely experienced suffering. Some have had more intense experiences than other, but suffering can be a heavy burden to whoever is going through it. What is a way that you have experienced suffering up to this point in your life?

Read John 9:1-2.

2. The disciples assumption is that someone must have sinned for this man to have been born blind. They have reduced suffering to an equation. Who are some kinds of people that we might wrongly assume are getting what they deserve?

Read John 9:3.

3. Jesus’ response is that this suffering does not fit into that equation. But, this blindness was for the purpose that the works of God might be displayed in him. Are there ways that you have seen God work for good in your suffering?

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4. Keith talked about how we have a tendency to think to “love” means to not hurt, when it really means to be willing to inflict pain for a redemptive purpose. He referenced this quote from C.S. Lewis’ “A Grief Observed”:

“But suppose that what you are up against is a surgeon whose intentions are wholly good. The kinder and more conscientious he is, the more inexorably he will go on cutting. If he yielded to your entreaties, if he stopped before the operation was complete, all the pain up to that point would have been useless...What do people mean when they say ‘I am not afraid of God because I know He is good?’ Have they not been to a dentist?”

What do you find helpful about this illustration?

Read John 9:4-5.

5. In these verses, we find that Jesus is not indifferent to suffering, but is doing works to alleviate the root of all suffering. He brings light into darkness. He calls the disciples, and thereby all of us, to participate in the works of God while we have time. This might mean helping to alleviate someone’s suffering or it might mean helping someone to hope for the healing yet to come when Jesus returns. What are some practical ways we can be a light to those in darkness?

Sharing and Prayer Time

Perhaps people have shared a suffering that they are going through now. Consider praying as a group for those needs shared. Or, perhaps, have people pray silently for someone they know that is suffering, then close with a prayer that God would use to help show the light of Christ to those we prayed for.