

THE GOD WHO MEETS US IN SUFFERING

NAME _____

DATE _____

CASE SUMMARY

BIG QUESTION: If God is good, why does He allow suffering?

BIG IDEA: Christianity does not promise a life without suffering. It reveals a God who enters our suffering, works through brokenness, and gives us hope that suffering will not have the final word.

DAY 1

NEAR

A God who draws near.

DAY 2

ENTERED

God entered our story.

DAY 3

REDEEM

Redemption from brokenness.

DAY 4

SHARE

A hope we can share.

HOW TO USE THIS FILE

READ SCRIPTURE. / THINK DEEPER. / REFLECT HONESTLY.

DEFEND YOUR FAITH. / PRAY IT.

TRUTH / HUMILITY / LOVE

FOLLOW JESUS

DAY 1 - A GOD WHO DRAWS NEAR

READ: Psalm 34:18

APOLOGETICS QUESTION: If God loves us, why doesn't He prevent us from experiencing pain?

CASE NOTE

GOD'S NEARNESS IS NOT MEASURED BY THE ABSENCE OF PAIN.

He draws near to the brokenhearted.

READ

Psalm 34 was written by David during a season of intense trouble. He knew what it meant to experience fear, uncertainty, and distress. Yet he declares that God is near to the brokenhearted.

One of the most common objections to Christianity is this: "If God is real and good, why is there so much suffering in the world?" It's an honest question, and Scripture does not ignore it.

The Bible acknowledges that suffering is real. We experience pain because we live in a world affected by sin, brokenness, human choices, and death. But the Christian understanding of God is not that He watches suffering from a distance without concern.

Psalm 34:18 reveals something important about God's character: He draws near to those who are hurting. God's presence is not always demonstrated by immediately removing our circumstances. Sometimes His presence is demonstrated by sustaining us in the middle of them.

APOLOGETICS CONNECTION

The existence of suffering is a serious philosophical challenge, but suffering alone does not prove that God is absent or unloving. Christianity claims that God is both powerful and loving while also allowing meaningful human freedom and working toward the ultimate restoration of creation. We may not understand every reason God permits suffering, but Scripture consistently reveals His compassion toward those who experience it.

GOD IS NEAR

DAY 1 - A GOD WHO DRAWS NEAR

CONTINUED

THINK DEEPER

- + Why do you think people sometimes assume that God's love should mean a life without hardship?
- + How does Psalm 34:18 challenge the idea that God is distant or indifferent?
- + What is the difference between God removing pain and God being present in pain?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Think about a time when you experienced disappointment, grief, loneliness, or fear. Did you feel that God was absent? Looking back, can you identify ways He may have been sustaining you?

DEFEND YOUR FAITH

If someone says: "If God really loved people, He wouldn't let them suffer." How could you respond using Psalm 34:18?

MY RESPONSE

PRAYER

God, help me understand Your character even when I don't understand my circumstances. When I experience pain, remind me that You are near. Give me the wisdom to approach difficult questions honestly and the faith to trust what Your Word reveals about You. Amen.

REMEMBER

God's nearness is not measured by the absence of pain.

STAY NEAR

DAY 2 - GOD ENTERED OUR STORY

READ: John 1:14

APOLOGETICS QUESTION: How can we believe God understands human suffering if He is God?

CASE NOTE

GOD DID NOT REMAIN DISTANT FROM OUR SUFFERING.

He entered into it.

READ

Imagine watching someone you love experience something painful. You want to help, but you cannot fully understand what they are experiencing unless you have walked through something similar.

Christianity makes an extraordinary claim about God: He did not remain distant from humanity's brokenness. John 1:14 tells us that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Word is Jesus Christ, God the Son, who took on human nature.

Jesus experienced hunger, exhaustion, grief, rejection, betrayal, physical pain, and death. Consider Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus in John 11. Jesus knew He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, yet He still wept alongside those who were grieving.

This reveals something profound about God. He is not emotionally detached from human suffering. The incarnation is central to the Christian answer to suffering. God did not simply send instructions from heaven about how to endure pain. In Jesus, He entered human history and experienced suffering Himself.

And at the cross, Jesus willingly endured suffering to accomplish our redemption.

APOLOGETICS CONNECTION

The incarnation is a central Christian claim about God's character. Jesus provides a historical and theological foundation for understanding God's compassion. The cross demonstrates that God's love is not merely an idea or emotion. It is revealed through His willingness to sacrifice Himself for humanity.

DAY 2 - GOD ENTERED OUR STORY

CONTINUED

Christianity does not teach that God promises to keep us from every painful experience. It teaches that God has acted decisively to rescue us from sin and death through Jesus.

THINK DEEPER

- + Why is it significant that Jesus experienced grief and physical suffering?
- + What does Jesus weeping at Lazarus's tomb reveal about God's compassion?
- + How does the cross change the way we understand God's relationship with human suffering?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

What does it mean to you that Jesus understands rejection, grief, loneliness, and pain? How might that truth change the way you approach Him when you are hurting?

DEFEND YOUR FAITH

If someone says: "God can't understand what it feels like to be human." How would John 1:14 help you respond?

MY RESPONSE

PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for coming into our broken world. Thank You for experiencing humanity and willingly suffering for our redemption. Help me see Your love more clearly through the incarnation and the cross. When I feel alone, remind me that You understand and that I can approach You with confidence. Amen.

REMEMBER

God did not remain distant from our suffering. He entered into it.

HE ENTERED IN

DAY 3 - REDEMPTION FROM BROKENNESS

READ: Romans 8:28

APOLOGETICS QUESTION: If God is good, why doesn't He stop bad things from happening?

CASE NOTE

GOD DOES NOT CALL EVIL GOOD.

He is able to bring redemption even out of real evil.

READ

Romans 8:28 is one of the most encouraging promises in Scripture, but it is also one of the most misunderstood. It does not say that everything that happens is good. Betrayal is not good. Abuse is not good. Death is not good. Injustice is not good.

The verse teaches that God is able to work all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Notice the difference: God does not call evil good. He demonstrates His power by bringing redemption even out of circumstances that are genuinely evil.

Consider Joseph in Genesis 37-50. His brothers betrayed him, he was sold into slavery, and he was unjustly imprisoned. These were real acts of wrongdoing. Yet God worked through Joseph's circumstances to preserve many lives during a famine. Joseph eventually recognized that what others intended for evil, God intended for good (Genesis 50:20).

The greatest example of this truth is the cross. The crucifixion of Jesus was an act of injustice and evil. Yet God used what appeared to be a devastating defeat to accomplish salvation through Christ's death and resurrection.

DAY 3 - REDEMPTION FROM BROKENNESS

CONTINUED

APOLOGETICS CONNECTION

A common misunderstanding is that an all-powerful God must prevent every evil action to prove His goodness. Christianity presents a more complete picture: God can permit human beings to make meaningful choices while still exercising sovereignty over history and bringing His redemptive purposes to completion. We should be careful not to claim that we know why every individual tragedy occurred. Romans 8:28 is not permission to minimize someone's pain or promise that every circumstance will turn out the way we want. It is a promise that evil, suffering, and hardship cannot ultimately defeat God's purposes for His people.

THINK DEEPER

- + What is the difference between God causing something and God redeeming something?
- + How does Joseph's story demonstrate God's ability to work through evil?
- + Why is the resurrection essential to our understanding of suffering and hope?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Is there an area of your life where you are struggling to see God's purpose? What would it look like to trust His character without needing to understand every detail of His plan?

DEFEND YOUR FAITH

If someone says: "If God allows bad things to happen, He must not be good." How could Joseph's story or the cross help you explain the Christian perspective?

MY RESPONSE

PRAYER

Father, help me trust that Your goodness is greater than what I can see. Teach me to distinguish between what is evil and what You can redeem. When life feels confusing or unfair, strengthen my faith in Your sovereignty and remind me that Your purposes cannot be defeated. Amen.

REDEMPTION IS REAL

DAY 4 - A HOPE WE CAN SHARE

READ: 2 Corinthians 1:4

APOLOGETICS QUESTION: How should Christians respond when someone is suffering or questioning God's goodness?

CASE NOTE

TRUTH SHOULD SOUND LIKE JESUS.

A strong defense of the faith combines truth, humility, and love.

READ

Throughout this devotional, we have explored difficult questions about God's goodness, suffering, and the Christian faith. But apologetics is not simply about knowing the right answer.

The word apologetics comes from the Greek word apologia, meaning a defense or reasoned explanation. In Christianity, apologetics helps us explain why we believe what we believe.

However, the way we communicate our faith matters just as much as the information we share. In 2 Corinthians 1:4, Paul explains that God comforts us in our troubles so that we can comfort others with the comfort we ourselves have received from Him.

God's comfort is not intended to stop with us. We are called to become people who reflect His compassion to others. When someone is grieving, struggling, experiencing family difficulties, or questioning whether God cares, our first responsibility is not necessarily to provide a theological explanation. Sometimes the most Christlike response is to listen, sit with them, pray, and remind them that they are not alone.

There is a time to explain what we believe, but there is also a time to simply demonstrate the love of Christ.

DAY 4 - A HOPE WE CAN SHARE

CONTINUED

APOLOGETICS CONNECTION

1 Peter 3:15 instructs believers to be prepared to give a reason for the hope within them, while doing so with gentleness and respect. This is the heart of Christian apologetics. We do not have to pretend we know the answer to every question. We can acknowledge what we don't understand while confidently sharing what we do know about Jesus. Our lives should support the truth we proclaim. A strong defense of the Christian faith combines truth, humility, and love.

THINK DEEPER

- + Why might someone need compassion before they are ready to hear an explanation?
- + How can our actions strengthen or weaken the message of the Gospel?
- + What is the difference between defending your faith and trying to win an argument?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Think of someone in your life who may be experiencing a difficult season. How can you demonstrate God's comfort to them this week?

DEFEND YOUR FAITH

If someone says: "Christians talk about God's love, but I don't see it in the way they treat people." How could you respond honestly while demonstrating the character of Jesus?

MY RESPONSE

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for the comfort You have given me. Help me become someone who reflects Your compassion to others. Give me courage to explain my faith, humility to acknowledge what I do not know, and wisdom to recognize when someone needs love more than an answer. Let my words and actions point people toward Jesus. Amen.

TRUTH + LOVE

FINAL DEVOTIONAL CHALLENGE

CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE CHRISTIAN HOPE?

After completing the four days, construct a response to the question: "If God is good, why does He allow suffering?" Use each Scripture to build your answer.

EXHIBIT A PSALM 34:18 - GOD'S CHARACTER

What does this verse reveal about God's relationship with those who are hurting?

EXHIBIT B JOHN 1:14 - GOD'S ACTION

How did Jesus demonstrate that God is not distant from human suffering?

EXHIBIT C ROMANS 8:28 - GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

How can God bring redemption from circumstances that are genuinely evil?

EXHIBIT D 2 CORINTHIANS 1:4 - OUR RESPONSE

How should this truth influence the way we treat people who are suffering?

MY FINAL RESPONSE

Our faith is not built on the promise that life will never hurt.
It is built on the truth that Jesus has overcome the world. (John 16:33)

CASE FILE REVIEWED