

**Welcome to the
Common Ground Café!**



Sunday, October 14, 2018

**Doubting the Existence of God
in a World of Suffering
A Study of 2 Corinthians 4:7-18**

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Imagine a friend has come to you upset because of a personal tragedy. He or she says, “I can’t believe in a God who would allow things like this to happen.”

Arrange the following responses in the order you think you should discuss them with your friend. You can also strike out an answer you think *never* belongs as a response to a friend’s suffering. Be ready to explain your answers.

Reassure your friend that “God always works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28)

Gently try to tell your friend about why God might allow their suffering.

Lovingly assure your friend, “I’m sure that somehow it’s all going to work out for the best.”

Listen to your friend without saying much in response.

Put an arm around your friend and kindly say, “Remember, it will make you stronger.”

The point is: The things we’re discussing today aren’t necessarily the first things you’d want to raise with a friend in the midst of their pain. But in order for us to advance in our spiritual search or our spiritual growth, we eventually need to wrestle with today’s topic.

Pastor Tom said that human history is a drama made up of three “acts.” Name and summarize those three acts:

Act One: Cr_____.

Act Two: Cr_____.

Act Three: Cr_____.

Reflecting on the Beloved helps us endure suffering for three reasons:

**By reflecting on the Beloved,
we know God loves us.**

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-10.

What was Paul saying about bad things happening to him?

How can meditating on God's suffering in Christ help you when bad things happen?

**By reflecting on the Beloved,
we know there is a purpose.**

Read 2 Corinthians 4:10-12.

What was Paul saying about the purpose of suffering – God's and ours? (Compare 1 Peter 4:12-13)

If we're convinced that pain plays some small part in God's big plans, how can that make a difference when bad things happen?

In what ways might good come from bad? Do you have any experience with this? What have you learned or what blessings have you experienced as a result of enduring some hardship? How have difficulties shaped your character and values? How are you different today as a result of the problems you've had to face in life?

"If you have a God great and transcendent enough to be mad at because he hasn't stopped evil and suffering in the world, then you have (at the same moment) a God great and transcendent enough to have good reasons for allowing it to continue that you can't know."

Tim Keller

**By reflecting on the Beloved,
we know that God wins the war**

Read 2 Corinthians 4:14-18.

What was Paul saying about the final act of God's Big Story?
(Compare 1 Corinthians 15:25-26)

What is broken will be restored in a glorious way. How can that help you when bad things happen?

As you make your group prayer list today, take extra time to pray for those in pain and hardship.



Close with praise reports and prayer requests