

Introduction: Why do we suffer?

Four Possibilities:

1. Suffering may be the result of our own sin and poor choices. Galatians 6:7-8
(i.e. David with Bathsheba)
2. Suffering may be the result of satanic spiritual attack. Ephesians 6:10-12
(i.e. Job, chapter 1)
3. Suffering may occur simply because we live in a fallen world. Romans 8:18-23
(i.e. Tower of Siloam, Luke 13) Genesis 3
4. Suffering may be the result of doing good. 1 Peter 2:19-21
(i.e. Peter preaches = prison)

Question: How do *you* deal with unjust suffering?

A model to follow:

Ephesians 3:1-13

God's Prisoner: _____

¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

God's Secret Plan: _____

²Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Paul's Role in God's Plan: _____

⁷I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of His power. ⁸Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

The Purpose of the Church: _____ & _____

¹⁰His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

4 Principles to Remember When You're Suffering Unjustly:

1. We are _____ . Ephesians 3:1

2. Until we understand what God is up to in “ _____ ,” Ephesians 3:2-6
we will never understand what He's up to in “ _____ .”

3. Until we understand our role in “ _____ ,” Ephesians 3:7-9
we will forever be frustrated with God's failure to fulfill “our plans.”

4. Until we grasp the extraordinary privilege and Ephesians 3:10-13
eternal impact of suffering for good, we will squander
the _____
God will ever provide us to glorify His name, and commune with His heart.

Conclusion/Application:

Ephesians 3:13

- **Don't be discouraged! God uses unjust suffering to reveal His character to others and His grace to us.**

There is more to life than “right now.” The Christian life was never meant, this side of heaven, to make people happy! The Christian life was meant to “free us” to love and to be loved, and to experience exceeding joy in relationship with Christ and one another, regardless of our circumstances.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever suffered unjustly? How did you handle it?
2. Which of the “4 Principles to Remember” were most helpful to you? Why?
3. Read 1 Peter 2:19-25, James 1:2-4, and Romans 5:1-5. Discuss the theme that emerges from these passages as it relates to today's message and your life.
4. In what specific way could you put into practice one of the “4 Principles” you learned today?