



Study Guide for Untouchables Suffering November 8, 2009

Open Up

Some untouchable topics might not affect everyone in your group, but suffering invades all our lives. Ask your group members to talk about examples of suffering in their own lives or someone they know well. **TRANSITION:** Both personal experience and the Bible teach that suffering is universal, so let's study how Jesus touched and helped those who suffer.

Dig In

- 1) Read John 16:32-33. As Jesus talked with his disciples on the night before he was crucified, he knew he would face enormous physical and emotional suffering. What warnings does Jesus give to his disciples? What reassurances does he give? **OPTIONAL:** Why might Christians sometimes believe that following God means bad things shouldn't happen to them any more?
- 2) Read John 9:1-7, 13-17, 24-25, 35-38. People in Jesus' time assumed suffering came from God's punishment of (sometimes secret) sin by the suffering person or a close family member. Other Bible passages show this is not true (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20). Discuss our modern culture's opinions on the connection between sin and suffering, for example in the cases of sexually transmitted disease, smoking, drugs, etc. **OPTIONAL:** Read John 9:26-34. What attitude does the religious leadership have towards Jesus and the blind man? Are there people today who claim to be religious who have similar attitudes towards suffering?
- 3) Read Romans 5:3-5. Ask your group to share real life examples of how suffering produced one or more of the positive qualities in Romans 3, or other positive qualities, such as a sense of humor or greater compassion. **OPTIONAL:** Read 1 Peter 4:12-13. Though Peter is specifically referring to persecution, how do these verses help us cope with other kinds of suffering?

Work On

As you read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, notice how the Holy Spirit brings deep community through suffering. Discuss with your group practical ways your group can pro-actively comfort people they know who are suffering.

Lift Up

Ask someone to read Revelation 21:3-4 aloud. Pray for the Holy Spirit's help in coping with present-day suffering and give thanks to God for hope for the future.

Another Step – Advanced Study

- 1) John 14:8-17 includes the phrase, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." How might we understand Jesus' words in relations to prayers for relief from suffering that are not answered in the way we had hoped? Read Matthew 26:37-44 for an example of Jesus praying for something that was not answered in the way he asked.
- 2) One way for us to cope with our own suffering is to remember others who are suffering. One mission organization that serves orphans and others suffering persecution and hardship is <http://RememberTheChildren.org> (orphans and other "untouchables" in Eastern Europe). As a group, learn more about this or other organizations whose primary mission is to relieve suffering.