

## THE BIG IDEA: God permits suffering because there's purpose in suffering.

### The Take-Off

Our May series - disCOMFORT - could not have been more timely.

It's based mostly on the life of Abraham and how God used discomfort in his life to prepare him to receive the promise  
If you remember, God called Abraham to leave what he knew and walk toward what he didn't

He did all of that because He wanted to bless the world through Abraham, and so he called him out of comfort into covenant to be a conduit

He calls us to the same, and so we have to leave what's comfortable to live what's possible

We've talked about the discomfort of waiting - it took 25 years from the promise to the fulfillment

We've talked about the discomfort of obedience - God asked Abraham to sacrifice the son he'd been promised - it was a test to see if Abraham was almost in or all in

Today, we're going to look at the discomfort of suffering because it's another way that God prepares for the promise

Let me give you the Big Idea right up front because it's one that we're going to need to chew on - a lot

### **God permits suffering because there's purpose in suffering**

Listen, none of us wants to agree with that, but we all already do

**Parents who take their children in for shots** allow pain because there's a reason for the shot

This weekend - even though it may look different - we celebrate and honor **men and women who suffered in war** because they knew there was a purpose greater than even their life

We know from even our brief look into the life of **Abraham** that he suffered, but why did he embrace it?

**Hebrews 11:13-16** tells us - he was looking for the greater promise and purpose in it

So we also have to come to grips with the purpose of suffering, because it's one of the common experiences we have

One last disclaimer before we begin: suffering is something that we all have in common, but not all of us suffer in common ways

We're experiencing suffering during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it's not the same suffering as maybe the persecuted church in a hostile country where believers are killed for gathering

But if we minimize our suffering (Suck it up, America! At least you aren't being killed!) then we minimize the purposes that God is achieving through our suffering

So we come to this teaching humbly and in appreciation that all of us experience it and God sees all of us

Let's tackle it like this: let's look at 4 ways that God uses suffering and then end with something that we all have and something that we all need

First up? 4 ways that God can use suffering in our lives.

## 1. How God uses suffering

### a. **PURPOSE #1: To make us like Christ**

- **Romans 8:28-29** / We know God works all things for good, but why? To help us look like Jesus!
- It's good for us to become like Christ!
- **John 15:20** / They persecuted Jesus and we're not better than He is
- **Hebrews 2:10** / Jesus was perfected (made complete, as in fully experiencing the human condition) through suffering
- Since God uses suffering to conform us to the image of Jesus, **instead of praying for deliverance from suffering, a better prayer would be for transformation through suffering**

### b. **PURPOSE #2: To teach us to trust**

- We'll talk more about this next week (you do NOT want to miss that one!!), but here's a quick peek
- **2 Corinthians 1:8-9** / The very things that make us weak make us need One who isn't
- Suffering causes us to rely on the Father, not on ourselves

### c. **PURPOSE #3: To warn the world**

- **Luke 13:1-5** / We learn of 2 tragedies and Jesus used both to highlight repentance
- Suffering isn't a judgement on us as much as a warning to us, and we'd do well to listen
- I know that the most painful times of my life have also been the most clarifying times about what matters most
- C.S. Lewis - "God shouts in our pain"

d. **PURPOSE #4: To comfort the hurting**

- **2 Corinthians 1:3-7**
- How powerful it is when we are hurting and another takes our hand and says, “I know exactly how you feel. I’ve been there, and God brought me through it.”
- God uses suffering in order to help us have His compassionate heart for the hurting
- **Matthew 9:36** / Jesus saw the crowd and had compassion on them

## 2. What we have and what we need to take

- a. Let’s finish this up talking about something that we all have and something that we all need
- b. It’s found in **John 16:33**, but let’s start in **verse 32**
- c. The time was coming when they’d be scattered - sound familiar?
- d. In verse 33, Jesus tells them something they would all have and something they would all need
- e. “In this world you WILL HAVE trials and sorrows” - suffering
- f. The word for trials is “thlipsis” and it means “a pressing, pressing together, pressure”
- g. It’s used in **John 16:21** to describe the anguish of childbirth!
- h. Because we’re all going to experience this (**1 Peter 4:12** actually says not to think trials are strange!), Jesus tells us to take something that we’re going to need: COURAGE!

### The Landing

Courage is what our nation celebrates this weekend and it’s what we need so that we won’t quit in the middle of suffering and miss the point of suffering

There is purpose in the pain, and not a single tear is wasted.

Is it easy? Of course not. Is it worth it? 100%.

So take courage, my heart. Be steadfast my soul. He’s in the waiting.

He’s in the waiting.

Let’s pray.