

WEEK 4: WHERE IS GOD IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING?

OBJECTIVE

Create space for people to share vulnerably about the pain in their stories, and discuss the trust that it takes to surrender to God and His perfect plans. Being present and listening with compassion—not trying to fix—is key. Help individuals recognize personal suffering, since this may help them better engage with the topic of strongholds next week.

CHECK LIST

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Have two people share their story | <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure everyone knows the details of the Serve Experience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remind everyone the importance of confidentiality | <input type="checkbox"/> Remind the group about Strongholds next week, and the importance of everyone being present. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Give responsibility to those in your group who are future leaders | |

PRAYER POINTS

For deeper connections within your group as a result of the prayer experience. Pray that the people in your group experience God and their relationships with Him in a new way.

For openness in sharing as you move into the next two weeks of suffering, strongholds, and finding freedom, and that God would draw people to a place of surrender to Him.

God would show you whom He wants to be future small group and Rooted leaders.

GROUP TIME

Welcome—20 minutes

TIP: Use this time to further debrief how the prayer experience has impacted their week.

- What happened this week that surprised you? Why was it unexpected?
- Share anything that's come to mind about the prayer experience. How has it impacted your week?

Story—10 minutes

- Have two people share their 2-5 minute story of how they came to Christ, or how they ended up in this group.

TIP: Take notes when each person shares their story, writing down things they question or may not believe, or breakthroughs in their spiritual journey. You will use all of these notes when you pray for them to break free of strongholds and during the celebration.

Introduction Questions—10 minutes

- When you were a kid, did your parents ever make you give up something that was yours, and you knew it was not fair, but had to do it anyway?

Discussion—40 minutes

TIP: Keep in mind, you may have nonbelievers in your group. Help them to answer as is appropriate, or give them permission not to answer, and encourage them to ask questions.

- What challenged you or impacted you from your devotions this week? Where have you seen God at work around you recently? How have you seen God use you to accomplish His will? How do you wrestle with surrendering to God's will today?
- You can also pick one or two questions they answered in homework, and use it as basis for discussion.

TIP: Recognize that more mature Christians sometimes share challenging experiences from many years ago. Encourage them to tell of times God has moved in their lives recently.

TIP: Be okay with disagreement. We are all on our own journeys and may not see eye to eye on everything. Encourage people to bring their Bibles and share their views based on what the Bible says, not just what they think the Bible says. Ask, "Where did you see that? Let's find the context for it."

Prayer Requests—25 minutes

- Increase the focus on prayer, giving everyone the opportunity to develop the spiritual discipline of quieting their hearts to listen to God.
- Close with a group prayer.

Closing – 15 minutes

- Prepare your group for next week. The strongholds week is powerful and moving. Let them know they will be sharing their stronghold struggles in the group in a

way that is sensitive, confidential, and honoring to God. Let your group know you will be praying for them throughout the week.

- The daily devotions will take more time for Week 5.
- If you prefer, you can set additional time to pray over strongholds outside of the group time.
- Ensure you have a set time and location for your Serve Experience, and everyone has the specifics on their calendars and has arranged for childcare if needed. 100% participation is the goal.
- Remind everyone of the importance of confidentiality.

WORKBOOK REVIEW

Where Is God In The Midst Of Suffering?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

DAY 1 – THE REALITY OF HARDSHIP AND SUFFERING

All of us have gone through times of despair or feeling completely alone. In that time, what were your feelings about your situation and about God?

What lessons learned from David's life can help you through these challenging times?

DAY 2 – YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Describe a time when you have felt hopeless.

Describe a time when, despite your circumstances, you have had hope from the Lord.

DAY 3 – DOUBLE-FISTED FAITH

Describe your feelings of "double- fisted faith." Is this idea a struggle for you? Or do you embrace it?

When have you had to clench your fists and cling tightly onto God's promises, not knowing the outcome of the situation?

DAY 4 – OUR RESPONSE: SURRENDER

What would it take to completely surrender your life to God?

What is a care in your life you need to give over to God right now?

DAY 5 – CHARACTER LIKE CHRIST

What challenges are you facing now that are helping transform your character to be more like Christ's?

Where do you see God's hand working in your circumstances?