



# John on Jesus

## *Why Do We Suffer?*

Small Group Work Sheet

November 11, 2012

### Part 1 - Ice Breaker

There are many forms of suffering. Natural disaster. Disease and sickness. Child deformities. Which type of suffering causes the most hurt to your heart?



### Part 2 - Sermon Review

1. How has God used suffering in your life to open your eyes to Jesus?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9. What weaknesses has God allowed into your life that keeps you dependent upon him.
3. Read 2 Corinthians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 7:6-7. How has your suffering and God's comfort changed the way you handle people?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 11:32. Josef Tson, a pastor from Romania, put it this way, 95 percent of Christians will fail the test of prosperity, but 95 percent of Christians will pass the test of adversity. Why is suffering essential to the Christian life?
5. Read Hebrews 12:8-11; Psalm 119:67. Why is suffering the path to holiness?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 4:17; James 1:12. How does the way we handle suffering translate to our eternal reward?

God uses suffering to purge sin from our lives, strengthen our commitment to him, force us to depend on his grace, bind us together with other believers, produced discernment, foster sensitivity, discipline our minds, impart wisdom, stretch our hope, cause us to know Christ better, make us long for truth, lead us to repentance of sin, teach us to give thanks in times of sorrow, increase our faith, and strengthen our character.

And once he accomplishes such great things, often we can see that our suffering has been worth it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Alcorn, *If God is Good*, pg. 396.

## Part 3 - Digging Deeper - The Eric Liddell Story<sup>2</sup>

Eric Liddell, “the flying Scotsman” of the movie chariots of fire, shocked everyone by refusing to run the 100 meter dash in the 1924 Paris Olympics, a race experts favored him to win. He withdrew because the qualifying heat took place on a Sunday, and he refused to “violate the Sabbath.” Liddell went on to win a gold medal—and break the world record—in the 400 meters, not his strongest event.

For a number of years, Liddell served as a missionary in China, but when the Japanese occupation made life dangerous, he sent his pregnant wife and 2 daughters to Canada. Japanese invaders delivered him to a squalid prison camp where he lived several years before dying at age 43 of a brain tumor, a few months before the war ended. Liddell never saw his family again in this life and never got to see the youngest of his three daughters.

Why did God withhold from this great man of faith a long life, years of fruitful service, the companionship of his wife, and the joy of raising those beloved children? It makes no sense.

And yet...

There is another way to look at the Eric Liddell story.

Randy Alcorn tells of a day he and his wife Nancy spent in England with Phil and Margaret Holder. Margaret was born in China to missionary parents. In 1939, when Japan took control of eastern China, soldiers separated 13-year-old Margaret from her parents and imprisoned her for six years. Margaret told the Alcorns stories about a godly man who tutored her and the other children, organized sporting events, and brought God's word to them. All the children in the camp loved him dearly. He was their inspiration. Margaret then said his name was Eric Liddell. Through tears, Margaret said, “it was a cold February day when uncle Eric died.” If all Scotland mourned Liddell's death, no one mourned like the children in that camp. Only five months later, paratroopers rescued the camps survivors. The children were at last reunited with their parents.

Eric Liddell's presence in that camp broke the hearts of his family. But for years, nearly to the wars end, God used him as a lifeline to hundreds of children, including Margaret Holder. Viewed from that perspective, the apparent tragedy of Liddell's presence in that camp makes more sense. I'm convinced Liddell, and his family, would tell us — and one day will tell us — that the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory they now know... and will know forever.

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<sup>2</sup> Randy Alcorn, If God is Good, pg. 442.