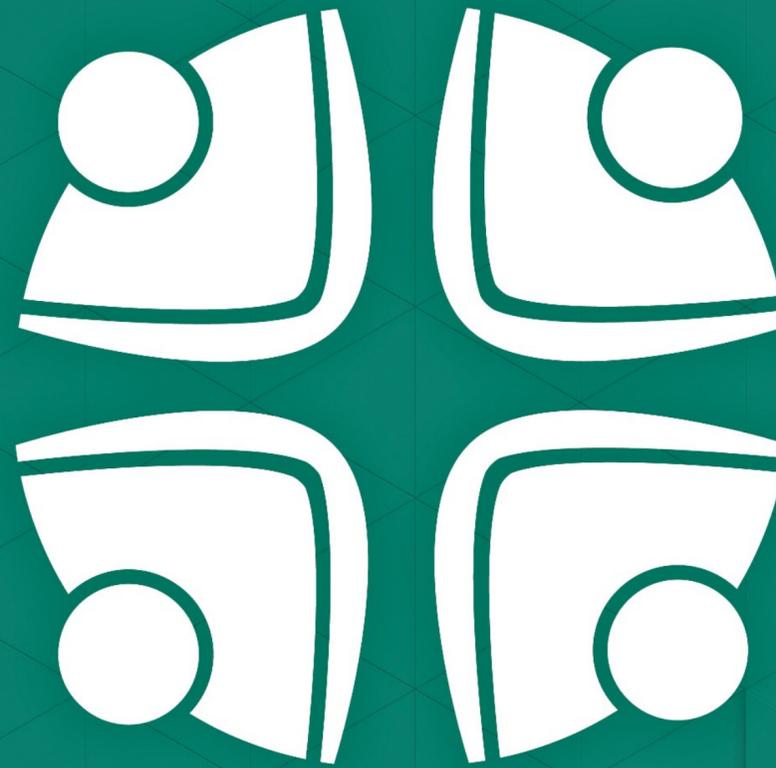


THEOLOGICAL FORUMS



May 24th | 8-11AM
SPRING FORUM

**GOD IN SUFFERING
(EXAMINING GOD'S
SOVERIGNTY & LOVE)**

IS GOD REALLY IN CONTROL?
TRUSTING GOD IN A WORLD OF HURTS
ERRY BRIDGES

SUFFERING IS NEVER FOR NOTHING
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FOREWORD BY JONI EASTECHODU PAPA

THEOLOGICAL TRAINING
AT COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH



Theological Forum Objectives



1) INCREASED KNOWLEDGE | We study so that we may know God. (Col 1:10)

Theological study increases our understanding of God's Wisdom and inflames our hearts to love Him.

2) ENHANCED EXPOSITION | We study so that we may faithfully preach and teach Scripture. (2 Tim 2:2)

Theological study supports both exegetical analysis and expository teaching & preaching.

3) DEEPENED WORSHIP | We study so that we may worship and obey Christ. (Heb 12:28)

Theological study is not an end in itself. It is, first and foremost, a spiritual endeavor.

4) GROWING CHRISTLIKENESS | We study so that the church may conform to the image of Christ! (Eph 4:22-24)

Theological study, or the revelation of the perfect God, is a gift of grace given by God for our sanctification.

Lessons from the Cross

The Gospel "Good News" of Suffering



Part One



1. Jesus' Suffering was the Path to Glory



John 12:23—24

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified... unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies..."

GOSPEL TRUTH:

From a human perspective, the Cross appears to be defeat. From God's perspective, it is the pinnacle revelation of God's Glory.

- A. God uses suffering — **to open our eyes to see Him with greater clarity.**
- B. God uses suffering — **as a witness of His glory through our lives.**



2. The Cross Is About God's Glory First



GOSPEL TRUTH:

We are the gracious beneficiaries of the Cross, but our salvation is not its central purpose—God's glory is the purpose of the Cross.

- A. The Cross is not primarily about us—it is about **God's Glory**.
- B. The ultimate purpose of the Cross (Jesus Suffering) is **the revelation of:**
 - God's **Justice** – Romans 3:25–26
 - God's **Grace** – Ephesians 2:8–9
 - God's **Sovereignty** – Acts 2:23
 - God's **Glory** – John 17:1, John 12:27–28



3. The Peace of God Flows from the Pain of the Cross



Isaiah 53:5

"The punishment that brought us peace was on Him..."

GOSPEL TRUTH:

The Cross transforms suffering into peace. Supernatural peace in sorrow is one of the most powerful Gospel witnesses—to us and to the world.

- A. Jesus' suffering **resulted in our peace** with God.
- B. Our suffering, **surrendered to Jesus**, becomes a path to greater **experimental knowledge** of the present peace of God.



4. The Cross was Fruitful

–Suffering Exercises and Matures our Faith



Hebrews 12:11

“...later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

GOSPEL TRUTH:

Suffering is the Savior's training ground for deeper trust and maturity.

- A. Suffering reveals weakness (human condition), which **drives us to God's strength** (Jesus' provision).
- B. The “**exercise**” of suffering, allowed by our wise Father, **keeps us tethered** to the truth that we need God's ongoing power and Presence. A power and presence made available to us because of the Cross.



5. The Gospel reveals the Way to Life came through death — Loss in Christ's Hands Becomes a Path to Life



Matthew 5:4

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

GOSPEL TRUTH:

When suffering is given to Jesus, it leads to life—not just survival, but abundance.

- A. The Gospel, the Cross, is the greatest example of death to life—loss to fruit.
- B. Every “death” in our lives (loss, grief, disappointment) is a chance to know Christ more deeply.
- C. Jesus is the life-giver; in His presence is fullness of joy. (Psalm 16:11)



6. The Suffering of Jesus was Good: God's Glory—My Good!



John 4:13-14

"Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst."

GOSPEL TRUTH:

Suffering refines our vision of true fulfillment—the presence of Jesus!

Anything that causes us to "see" Him is indeed for our "Good."

- A. Life is full of mirages—false hopes and counterfeit joys.
- B. Suffering redirects us to the true spring of life: Jesus Himself.

Gospel Application in Suffering

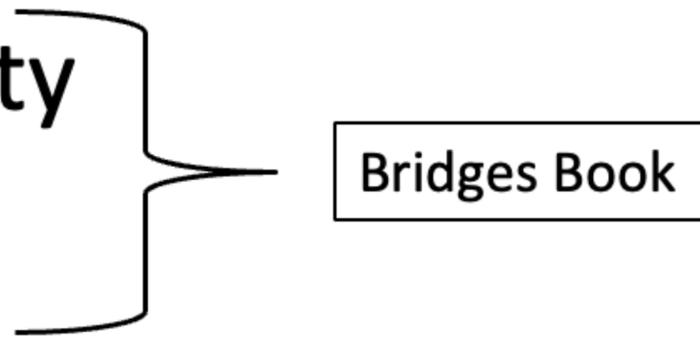
1. Rest in God's Sovereign Hand.
2. Pursue Peace (Jesus) in Pain.
3. Let suffering produce the fruit of Faith.
4. See Christ—not just your circumstances

Doctrines about Suffering that flow from the Gospel



Doctrines flowing from the Gospel

- Theology of God's Sovereignty
- Theology of God's Wisdom
- Theology of God's Love
- **Theology of the Fall**
- **Theology of Mortification**
- **Theology of God's (fatherly) Discipline**
- **Theology of God's Presence**
- **Theology of Affliction**



Bridges Book

Theology of the Fall

- **Psalm 39:4-5- Gospel tie: Only God can save**
 - **We are transient**

Theology of the Fall

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 - We are transient
- **Romans 8:20-23- Gospel tie: Redemption comes**
 - Groaning and suffering is everywhere...
 - ...So we eagerly await

Theology of the Fall

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- **John 17:14-17- Gospel tie: The Word of the Cross separates us from the World**
 - ‘Not a native’: World hates us, Devil targets us

Theology of the Fall

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Sin ruins earthly fulfillment

Your turn!- Four groups...

Divide up the members

Break-Out Groups (4)

Groups:

1: Mortification

3. God's Presence

2: Testing or Discipline

4. Affliction

Group Actions:

- **Read and discuss all 3 verses (not just 2).**
- **Pick a spokesperson.**
- **Summarize Gospel tie and Suffering point(s).**
- **Come back at _____ to brief.**

Theology of Mortification

VERSES	GOSPEL TIE	REFLECTION
Romans 6:3-8		
Phil 3:7-11		
Gal 2:20	My Life is now in and from the crucified Christ	Have I really died with Christ? 'I no longer live' ... me, but Christ

Theology of Testing

(Fatherly discipline, NOT punishment)

VERSES	GOSPEL TIE	REFLECTION
Deut 8:1-5		
1 Pet 1:3-9		
Heb 12:5-11	We have become God's sons & daughters	No discipline?- no relationship In the moment- it is sorrowful Discipline is for our good, yielding righteousness

Theology of God's Presence

VERSES	GOSPEL TIE	REFLECTION
Psalm 84:10-11	The cross secures our welcome unto God	Entering in with God is His desire and the sufferer's plea His 'gifts' are gracious to us and glorifying to Him
Isaiah 43:1-3		
Job 23:8-10		

Theology of Affliction

VERSES	GOSPEL TIE	REFLECTION
Acts 5:40-42	Gospel changes us, no longer fearful of man	Persecution produces rejoicing Obeying now exceeds my prospect of pain Our suffering can be honorable ('worthy')
Phil 1:27-29		
Psalm 119:67/71/75		

Tempting 'Functional doctrines'



Functional 'doctrines'?

- **Where is God?**
- **Why isn't God good?**
- **Why doesn't God act?**
- **Why am I suffering this illness?**
- **Why are people so hard?**

Where is God?

- **Temptation: Why hasn't our 'intervening' Savior come to intervene for me?**
- **Consider a response from:**
 - **God's Sovereignty, Wisdom & Love**
 - **Bible texts**
 - **Suffering-saint testimonies**

Where is God?

- **Temptation: Why hasn't our 'intervening' Savior come to intervene for me?**
- **Job 40:6-9**
 - Our doubt makes us accuse God in judgement
- **Isaiah 45:9**
 - As clay, we quarrel with God the Potter?

Why isn't God good?

- **Temptation: God isn't helping restore 'my' good**
- **Consider a response from:**
 - **God's Sovereignty, Wisdom & Love**
 - **Bible texts**
 - **Suffering-saint testimonies**

Why isn't God good?

- **Temptation: God isn't helping restore 'my' good**
- **Job 38-42/Psalm 50:21-23/Isaiah 55:6-9**
 - God is Creator, we are not
 - God is Savior, we are not
 - God's ways of mercy are not ours
- **Romans 8:26-30**
 - God = all causes ('His complex good > simple evil')
 - His purpose = Christlikeness, brethren, glorification

Why doesn't God act?

- **Temptation: God is silent- I must act for myself**
- **Consider a response from:**
 - **God's Sovereignty, Wisdom & Love**
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Why doesn't God act?

- **Temptation: God is silent- I must act for myself**
- **Isaiah 50:10-11**
 - **Trust and Obey in our darkness/trouble (x5 verbs)**
 - **Making our own 'light' brings punishment**

Why am I suffering this illness?

- **Temptation: As God's child, working for His kingdom... I should be healthier**
- **Consider a response from:**
 - **God's Sovereignty, Wisdom & Love**
 - **Bible texts**
 - **Suffering-saint testimonies**

Why am I suffering this illness?

- **Temptation: As God's child, working for His kingdom... I should be healthier**
- **2 Cor 12:7-10-**
 - His grace is sufficient
 - His power perfects our weakness
- **1 Cor 15:8-10- His grace labors in us**
- **2 Cor 9:8- His sufficient grace abounds to us**

Why are people so hard?

- **Temptation**: I show kindness, but I am dismissed- even by loved ones. I feel hurt.
- **Consider a response from:**
 - **God's Sovereignty, Wisdom & Love**
 - **Bible texts**
 - **Suffering-saint testimonies**

Why are people so hard?

- **Temptation**: I show kindness, but I am dismissed- even by loved ones. I feel hurt.
- **Luke 6:27,28 & 32-36**
 - My Christ-like love is needed, and expected
- **1 Peter 3:9**
 - Return a blessing; inherit a blessing
- **Col 3:12-13**
 - When we love and forgive, it comes from God

Other Tempting Premises

- **Self-centered confidence**
 - Undercuts faith-building opportunities
- **Stoic Endurance**
 - Lacks submission + dependence
- **Fatalism**
- **Excessive activity**
 - vs 'do the next thing'
- **Trusting in God's gifts more than God**

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POST-FORUM ASSIGNMENT



Personal: Choose a stanza from a hymn and share with another TF attendee how it exhorts or comforts you in affliction.

– Send your hymn stanza to Mike, Jon or Daniel

Relational: Choose a verse(s) where God speaks of His Person, Work and/or our need and write a card relaying this biblical truth to exhort or comfort another in affliction.

Complete Assignment by July 1



POST-FORUM ASSIGNMENT



To reinforce our learning and to encourage our congregation's understanding of God's Sovereignty, Wisdom, and Love in Suffering:

Assignment

1. Personal: Choose a stanza from a hymn and share with another TF attendee how it exhorts or comforts you in affliction.

– Send your hymn stanza to Mike, Jon or Daniel

2. Relational: Choose a verse(s) where God speaks of His Person, Work and/or our need and write a card relaying this biblical truth to exhort or comfort another in affliction.

Complete Assignment by July 1st.



Closing Review & Applications



BE

- ***Praise God- and Trust Him***
 - Believe He harmonizes Glory/Good & Love/Suffering*
- ***Hear God- to ‘see’ Him***
 - Job’s transformation- 42:5*

DO

- ***Pray for afflicted (2 Thess 1:1-12)***
- ***Suffer together (2 Cor 1:3-11)***

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