

Ribbon of Blue Pt. 2- Make Suffering Make Sense

Discussion Notes- September 28, 2025

1. Who is someone in your life that you've seen handle difficulty with faith or resilience?

Suffering doesn't make sense on its own, but Scripture shows us it is the result of living in a world broken by sin and under the curse. Jesus told us we would face trouble, but also promised hope because He has overcome the world. The bigger danger comes when people let ideology (shaped by culture, pain, or media) replace theology, the truth of who God is. Without sound theology, false ideologies distort our view of God and justify evil, but with the gospel we find hope and transformation. As believers, we're called to know God and His Word, turn from false ideologies, and hold fast to the living hope we have in Christ.

Read Romans 8:20-24

"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

In Romans 8, Paul explains that all of creation has been affected by the curse of sin, which is why we experience brokenness, pain, and decay in the world. He describes this as creation "groaning," much like childbirth, pointing to both the present struggle and the hope of future restoration. Even we, as God's people, feel this tension as we long for the day when our bodies and the world will be fully redeemed.

2. Why is it important to view suffering through the lens of the curse rather than just our personal circumstances?

Read 1 Peter 4:12-13

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed."

Peter reminds us not to be surprised when we face suffering, because hardship is part of following Christ. Just as Jesus Himself endured rejection, pain, and even the cross, we share in His sufferings when we walk through trials. The good news is that our suffering won't end in despair; one day it will turn into joy and glory when Christ is fully revealed.

3. In what ways can remembering Christ's own suffering encourage you in your trials?

Read John 17:1-3

“When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

The scripture above reminds us that eternal life begins with truly knowing God and Jesus Christ, not just believing in religious ideas or following rituals. As A.W. Tozer said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us,” emphasizing how our understanding of God shapes our whole life. This verse challenges us to prioritize a close, personal relationship with God above any worldly ideology or philosophy.

4. Have you noticed ways your thinking or beliefs are influenced more by culture or society than by your personal understanding of God? How?

Read Matthew 5:43-45

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

Jesus challenges the natural human tendency to hold onto anger or seek revenge, calling us to love our enemies instead. He teaches that forgiveness and prayer for those who oppose us reflect God’s character and demonstrate a different, kingdom-centered way of living. By responding with love rather than retaliation, we participate in God’s work in the world and show that our hope and identity are rooted in Him, not in the world’s ideologies.

5. What step can you take this week to let go of anger and live out God’s call to forgive?

Prayer/Closing:

- Pray for a deeper understanding of God’s truth and theology to guide your life.
- Pray for the strength to respond to suffering with hope, patience, and faith in God’s promises.
- Pray for the grace to forgive others and resist bitterness, reflecting Christ’s love in all relationships.

Deep Dive: Knowing God and the Importance of Theology

Theology (what we believe about God) is the lens through which we view the world, make decisions, and respond to suffering. Not all beliefs about God are accurate, so Scripture calls us to carefully examine our understanding, rooting it in God's Word rather than culture, opinion, or ideology. Wisdom in theology protects us from deception, helps us grow in faith, and shapes how we live as God's children.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16–17

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Sound theology comes from Scripture; it equips us to live rightly in a broken world.

Read Colossians 2:6–8

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

We must discern teachings and philosophies carefully, measuring them against Christ-centered truth. While learning about the world, history, or different philosophies can be valuable, Scripture warns that human knowledge and reasoning can sometimes lead us away from God's truth. Colossians 2:8 cautions, *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”* True theology filters all knowledge through God's Word, allowing us to discern what aligns with His truth and what may be misleading or incomplete. Proverbs 1:7 reminds us, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* Wisdom begins with reverence for God, not merely accumulating facts or philosophies, and knowing Him personally keeps our understanding grounded and our theology sound.

Biblical Example: King Saul

King Saul illustrates the danger of letting human reasoning or ideology override true theology. Initially chosen by God, Saul gradually allowed fear, pride, and worldly reasoning to guide his decisions rather than fully trusting God. In **1 Samuel 13**, he offered a burnt sacrifice himself instead of waiting for Samuel, and in **1 Samuel 15**, he disobeyed God's command to destroy the Amalekites, rationalizing partial obedience. His theology—his understanding of God's authority and holiness—was distorted by fear, pride, and cultural pressures, leading to his rejection as king. Saul's story is a warning that even those chosen by God can be led astray when ideology or convenience replaces true knowledge of Him.

Read 1 Samuel 15:22-23

And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king."

1. How do you personally determine if a belief about God aligns with Scripture?
 2. How can we balance learning about the world while keeping our theology Christ-centered?
 3. Are there areas of your theology that need refining or deeper study to better reflect God's Word?
- Take one attribute of God this week (e.g., love, justice, sovereignty, mercy) and study Scripture passages related to it. Compare what the Bible says to common cultural or philosophical beliefs about that attribute, and journal insights.