

## ***“Following Jesus = No Suffering”***

*Introduce John & Shelli*

*Expand/Transition*

### ***Realization #1: “God is not the creator of suffering”***

**Genesis 1:31 (New Living Translation)**

**31 Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good! And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.**

Genesis or Beginnings share with us that at the very beginning, everything was very good!

The seas, the forests, the beast of the field, mankind...all were created very good or “perfect”

***Genesis 3:13-19 (New Living Translation)***

**13 Then the Lord God asked the woman, “What have you done?”**

**“The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”**

**14 Then the Lord God said to the serpent,**

**“Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live. 15 And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike<sup>a</sup> your head, and you will strike his heel.”**

**16 Then he said to the woman,**

**“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.<sup>b</sup>”**

**17 And to the man he said,**

**“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. 18 It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. 19 By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.”**

Expand upon that original sin caused suffering not only upon humans but upon creation! The earth!

**Romans 8:20-22 (New Living Translation)**

**20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.**

Man brought suffering into the world...

**Realization #2: “God chooses not wipe out suffering on the earth”**

**“Why doesn’t God wipe out all suffering right now?”**

**Good question but if one answers the question to its fullest extent...**

**We would not like the answer...**

**In order for God to wipe out all suffering, he would have to wipe out all cause of suffering. Since all people cause suffering, that solution would require that all people be wiped out.**

**We then may ask the question, why doesn’t God make people unable to cause suffering?**

**Answer: To do that, God would have to make people unable to choose.**

**But love requires a choice.**

**That solution would make a love relationship with God or to one another literally impossible!**

**If a person does not have choice, real love is impossible!**

**God does not desire to be loved out of force..**

**But by choice...**

**Speak of robot**

**Matt 5:45:**

**“That you may be sons of your Father 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”.**

***Realization #3: “There is a right way to respond to suffering”***

***Jesus is our model...***

**1 Peter 2:21-25 (The Message)**

**21-25 This is the kind of life you've been invited into, the kind of life Christ lived. He suffered everything that came his way so you would know that it could be done, and also know how to do it, step-by-step.**

**He never did one thing wrong, not once said anything amiss. They called him every name in the book and he said nothing back. He suffered in silence, content to let God set things right. He used his servant body to carry our sins to the Cross so we could be rid of sin, free to live the right way. His wounds became your healing. You were lost sheep with no idea who you were or where you were going. Now you're named and kept for good by the Shepherd of your souls.**

**Romans 8:17 (New Living Translation)**

**17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.**

**Philippians 1:29 (New Living Translation)**

**29 For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.**

**1 Peter 4:13 (New Living Translation)**

**13 Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.**

**What does the enduring of suffering do in our life?**

**Romans 5:3-4 (New Living Translation)**

**3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.**

**“He who suffers much will know much” Greek Proverb**

**Expand**

***Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved. Helen Keller***

**In scripture, we find another example of one who embraced the suffering.....**

Paul....

## 2 Corinthians 11:21-29 (New International Version)

21To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that! What anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. 22Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. 23Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

*Steve Dehner video*

### *Conclusions*

*Steve shared that “belief” is required & we also have to understand that on this side of eternity, we may or may not see why we had to experience suffering....*

*Consider for a moment Joseph....*

*Betrayed by his brothers....*

*Sold into slavery....*

*Imprisoned because of a lie...*

*And yet...*

*He was able to say...*

*Genesis 50:20 (New Living Translation)*

*20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.*

*In essence, Joseph would say, the suffering he endured was worth it!*

*The question for you is this....*

*“Do you believe your current struggle has a plan in your life & are you willing to embrace it?”*