A Painful Reality
April 2-3—Nathan Cookston

The ______________________ of pain
Genesis 3:14-19; 2 Timothy 1:9

The ______________________ of pain
Romans 8:18-25; 1 Peter 4:12-19

The ______________________ of pain
Matthew 8:27: Matthew 10:39; Lamentations 3:37
OUR TIME WITH GOD
For the full reading plan, go to SPCC.TV/Church Study & Resources

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3 QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE EACH DAY:

1. What is the passage saying?
2. Does the passage tell you something about God or about yourself?
3. Is there something Jesus is reminding you of regarding who He is or who you are in Christ? How is He inviting you to respond to His word to you today?

REFLECTING ON YOUR TIME WITH GOD THIS WEEK:

1. Whether you’re using SPCC’s reading plan or a different one, think about your time listening and responding to Jesus’ voice this week. As you journaled those conversations with Him, is there one thing in particular that you felt Him speaking to you about?
SHARING WITH YOUR GROUP:
2. Life Group leader, pick one person in your group this week to share their answer to question number one.

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTION:
3. Is there something you felt Jesus speaking to you about during the message? Explain.

As we discuss the topic of suffering, sometimes, with good intentions, we can try to offer “quick fixes” for people’s pain. We need to resist the temptation to offer a trite solution to people’s deep hurts. While it can be uncomfortable to hear someone express disillusionment and unresolved questions, let me encourage us to listen well. Let’s be compassionate listeners who are “quick to hear and slow to speak” as we trust the Holy Spirit to work in us through this series.
**MY PERSPECTIVE:**

4. Nathan talked about some misconceptions we can have regarding the pain we experience (i.e. God is absent, God is powerless, God is unfair, etc.) Is there one misconception you've wrestled with more than others? Explain.

**DIGGING DEEPER:**

5. Read the following verses: John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-19; James 1:2-4. What do these verses have to say about Christians and their experience with suffering? What truth in these passages do you find most challenging?
God math: My performance + God = no suffering

6. “God math” thinking leads us to believe that God will remove our suffering if we perform well for Him. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-9 & 2 Corinthians 12:7-11. Using these passages, how would you help a believer who struggles with this kind of thinking?

LOOKING DEEPER:
The church has not been spending its energy to go deep with the unfathomable God of the Bible. Against the overwhelming weight and seriousness of the Bible, much of the church is choosing, at this very moment, to become more light and shallow and entertainment-oriented, and therefore successful in its irrelevance to massive suffering and evil. The popular God of fun-church is simply too small and too affable to hold a hurricane in his hand. The biblical categories of God’s sovereignty lie like land mines in the pages of the Bible waiting for someone to seriously open the book. They don’t kill, but they do explode trivial notions of the Almighty…some people reading this are dying. There are people who love those who are dying; people who live with chronic pain; people who have just lost one of the most precious persons in their life; people who do not believe in the goodness of God—or in God at all….The evil and suffering in this world are greater than any of us can comprehend. But evil and suffering are not ultimate. God is. Satan, the great lover of evil and suffering, is not sovereign. God is….Therefore, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31) – John Piper, Suffering and the Sovereignty of God
MY RESPONSE:

7. Thinking about your own pain and trials, what questions about God have you wrestled with? If you have resolved those questions, how? If not, how is that affecting your walk with God?

8. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-11 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-9. Paul describes the groaning we experience in this life because we are burdened. What burden in your life makes you groan the most?

For while we are still in this tent we groan, being burdened…(2 Corinthians 5:4a)