

GOD

controls the STORM



MY SUFFERING AND GOD

As we begin our journey together and consider the need to guard and direct our thinking, the Issue of God rises to the surface first. As believers, God is to be the center of our thoughts, love, motives, etc. We have always heard (and verbally agreed with the truth) that God is sovereign, in control. We have been told that God is a God of mercy and love, and wants only the best for his children.

These days are probably some of the hardest you have ever faced, perhaps THE hardest. It's in days like these that thoughts, or perhaps DOUBTS, about God begin to surface very early.

Do you find yourself struggling to trust God? To understand "WHY?" ... "why me?" ... "why now?" ... even perhaps "after all I've done for God, why us instead of the family next door who hates you?". I think these feelings are normal, common, and need to be answered.

Once again, I want us to turn to Scripture and try to find some answers to how God and his character fit into not only our problems, but our need for answers. If you are a believer, and you know and love God, and desire to honor God in your heart and choices, I think we can look at his character and begin to build a trust and confidence in Him that is necessary for a solid foundation in handling the overwhelming sorrows we face TODAY.

What we will do is take a look at just a couple of God's attributes today and see if they will help weave together a bit of a safety net to catch us as we are falling in our Spirits. Pray now that God will help you to see and believe and hold fast to His character in a way you never have before this time. Perhaps that alone is the main reason he has brought you down into this deep valley... to come to know Him as you never have before?

1. GOD IS LOVE

Already we really need to say a few things here. This is one of the most foundational attributes of God’s character and perhaps one of the most underrated or misused.

When you attend church and hear “God is Love” I think it is very easy to just think “God is a mystical distant deity that would like for me to be really happy”. In reality the thing that needs to be most in the forefront of our mind is that God genuinely DOES care about us. Like a good parent, that will include doing what we might not like in order to make us what we need to be. But at the center of ALL His actions is a love that cares deeply for us and for us to be experiencing what will be BEST for life and eternity.

Though there are hundreds of passages, I’d like us to just think on one for each attribute. For love I’ve narrowed it to ...

^{NLT} 1Peter 5:6-7 - So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. ⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. ¹

^{ESV} 1Peter 5:6-7 - Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ²

This passage has much to consider...

We are told to give all of our anxieties and all of our concerns to God ... list below what are the greatest cares on your heart during these hard months?

In all honesty, which of these cares are you “hanging on too”, trying to figure out how YOU will solve it and worrying that you are not able to solve it?

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Pe 5:6–7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (1 Pe 5:6–7). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Considering what you just wrote ... the interesting thing is that “grammar” has a lot to say in this passage. The commanded action is not primarily “cast” ... it is “HUMBLE yourself”. This puts an interesting light on the issue of our suffering. We often will ask “HOW can I just ‘cast’ my burden?” ... but the passage answers that for us in the context. HUMBLE yourself ... know and believe you are NOT able ... you DO need help ... God IS in control and MUST be in control of your issues.

So ... let me ask you this ... are you seeing the need for God in all your worries and problems. Are you seeing GOD as the solution ... or are YOU still the solution? List a few of your greatest worries ... and try ... VERY hard to explain how PRIDE is causing you to hang on to that worry. (What is it in your life ... what you want ... what you think you need ... what you want to prevent ... what you don't think God will handle the way you want Him to ...?)

Finally, we can't overlook the extremely important phrase "... because He cares for you ..." WOW. Let that sink in ... the God ... the Creator and Sustainer of all the universe not only knows you and about you ... but ... HE CARES. This is the part of God's love that I think is often spiritualized away in our thinking as some distant mystical love. But it's not. It's a near and real and genuine care for you individually. Let me ask you to do this ... list out at least 5 clear ways you can see the definite and unquestionable love and care God has for you.

Now ... STOP ... take a few minutes and really thank God specifically for His care for you

2. GOD IS SOVEREIGN

Though there is so much about God’s character that should and NEEDS to be studied, understood, believed, and acted on; the one attribute that will sustain you the most in your weeks and months of trials is the firm belief that God is sovereign. By this we mean that He is divinely and all powerfully in control of all that comes into my life.

Though for some this causes some struggle to think that God would allow difficulties (we will discuss this issue more in lesson 5) in reality it should assure us that all things have gone through his hand, nothing has escaped his notice and his approval in our lives ... thus we are assured that all the suffering we endure has both a reason and will help us to bring glory to our God.

Once again, we face the struggle of picking a verse to help us discuss this part of His character since there are so many. I think one that has a lot for us to consider is:

Isaiah 46:9-10

⁹ Remember the things I have done in the past.

For I alone am God!

I am God, and there is none like me.

¹⁰ Only I can tell you the future

before it even happens.

Everything I plan will come to pass,

for I do whatever I wish.³

Don't you find it interesting how verse nine begins? REMEMBER the things I have done in the past. Though God is God and could easily just say “hey, trust me ... that's all you need to know” ... he doesn't. God has a track record. It's loving and its perfect. So, let's take a minute and do just that. REMEMBER, though you are hurting and suffering right now ... I want you to look back and remember how God has shown you his love and more specifically that he CAN be trusted.

What are a few specific ways you have learned in life that God is worthy of trust. (not verses you know ... examples in your life)?

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Is 46:9–10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

We see in verse 10 that ONLY God knows the future. In our suffering there are often a great many worries about our future. What are a few specific concerns you have about your future as you face this huge loss in your life??

“EVERYTHING I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish”. This is the key statement of this passage. God IS in control. He does whatever he wishes. So ... how does this knowledge factor into your suffering? What is going on in your life right now that you have never really considered or believed was from the hand of a God that is in total control? Does that bother you that he allows such things? Why do you think he does allow your suffering in this way?

TRUTH you NEED to remember ... put on a card, memorize, keep it with you ☺

Isaiah 46: 10b *Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish (NLT)*⁴

*God in His infinite wisdom knows exactly **what** adversity we need to grow more and more into the likeness of His Son. He not only knows what we need but **when we need it** and how **best** to bring it to pass in our lives... His discipline is always exactly suited for our needs.*⁵

⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Is 46:9–10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁵ Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*, p. 122



NAILING IT DOWN

In the blanks below ... start a list of all the things you have to be thankful to God for even though you are suffering. How is God showing his love for you this week?

Briefly list some of the things that seem to be “wrong” in life or out of control. As you think of the sovereignty of God and his desire to make you like his son ... what are some possible reasons he is allowing these difficulties in your life right now?

Write out a prayer to God about your suffering. Describe what you are going through, why it hurts, how you feel. Then tell him why His love and His Sovereignty is so comforting to you even though you hurt (use the back of the sheet as well if you want)
