

SERMON STUDY GUIDE

“Googling God”

For the sermon preached on 1/19/2020:
“ Why is there so much pain & suffering?

Pastor Leah Knight-Breton

From Mark 5:25-34

Googling God

Is God real?
Search I'm Feeling Lucky

How to use the Groups Study Guide

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture—study that leads to life transformation in Christ and strives to serve “the other.”

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method. In summary, this method stresses “**Observation**” (what the reader can see from the text), “**Interpretation**” (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and “**Application**” (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).
2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group. It’s recommended that you rephrase the questions to match your voice and have an understanding of the interpretive questions as you prepare to lead and facilitate.
3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the Group Life Team

Welcome back as we continue in our series, “Googling God.” As we said earlier in our previous study, it’s normal ... in fact, it’s healthy to wonder about the mysteries of life, faith, and God. It’s part of the human experience to doubt, question, and wrestle with these big topics. Hopefully, we’ll utilize the authority of Scripture, consider the wisdom of the past, and also the wisdom available to us now. And lastly, may we engage in helpful discussion with one another. So, may each of us grow in our faith as we read Scripture and share our hearts with one another.

One of the topics that garners the most attention is the problem of suffering. We have so many questions concerning it: “Why do we suffer so much?” and “Why do good people seem to suffer unfairly?”, and “Is there anything we can do to limit our suffering?” and many more.

Today we want to look at a text that Pastor Leah preached from in the Gospel of Mark. It’s about a woman who knew a lifetime of physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual suffering.

²⁵ (And) a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

³¹ “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ”

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Q – As you read the text, identify the various types of suffering you see above.

(Group Leader, before identifying the ones below, ask the group to read and share first.

Then offer ... there are no less than 5 aspects of suffering here ☺

- 1. Physical Suffering – the most obvious*
- 2. Emotional Suffering – the psychological toil that suffering brings*
- 3. Social or Relational Suffering – two aspects here – One is the relational distance that one experiences as they are limited in going out and interacting with others socially. Second is in her first century Jewish culture, she is seen as “unclean” and anyone who touches her is also now unclean.*
- 4. Financial Suffering – Vs. 26 says she has given all her money to doctors*
- 5. Spiritual Suffering – all who suffer wonder why God has allowed this? Is it a punishment, has God forgotten me, why God? There is a spiritual isolation that can result from suffering. (And praise God, often there can be spiritual intimacy in the midst of suffering but let’s wait until we get to that).*

Q – Follow-up – We’ll spend more time at the end of our study praying for each other but can you briefly describe a time where you experienced a set of these sufferings? Perhaps it was a job loss or a temporary ailment or injury. The idea is to see how one form of suffering associates with other forms.

Q – Leah said that in the midst of suffering, Jesus is with those who suffer. It may be hard to recognize at first, but as we read the Gospels, we see that Jesus is attentive and responsive to those that suffer and we see that Jesus himself suffered in many ways, and ultimately on the cross. How have you experienced Jesus’ nearness in the midst of your suffering?

Q – The text says there was a large crowd pressing against Jesus and the disciples. We can imagine the stress, noise, and blur of activity around them. Take a moment and think how can we as Christ-followers make space for those who suffer and bring them to Jesus in the midst of our stressful, noisy, and busy world?

(This is a challenging question but one that’s important to the testimony of the Church. Christ-followers can create margin in their lives in order to put themselves with others who are actually suffering. And that requires time that we typically don’t plan in our week. But when we spend time with those that suffer, in all the various forms, we can listen, pray, serve, encourage, and maybe even witness Jesus bring healing.)

Q – Re-read vs. 32-34 and imagine this moment of Jesus finding you in the midst of a crowd and saying, Daughter or Son, “Your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

We have all suffered differently, but we have all suffered. What has suffering taught you and if you have ever experienced Jesus in the midst of suffering, what impact has that made on you?

In our time remaining, are there burdens, pains, or sufferings that we can appropriately share with each other so we can pray together. Because of the size of our group and time restraints, we can’t get into the entire story, but perhaps we can begin conversations that could lead to coffee or sharing meals personally. How can we pray and support each other in the next couple of weeks?

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- a. Please note that not all these questions might be able to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your group the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your group.
 - b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
 - c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
 - d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
 - e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.