GUIA DE ESTUDO

Why isn't God stopping your pain?

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8 de agosto de 2026

BIG IDEA

God gave real freedom, and that freedom includes the possibility of suffering in a broken world.

Why do innocent people suffer?

The sermon opens with the crushing question: if God is good, all-powerful, and all-knowing, why does a child get cancer, why does a mother die, and why do we lose our job?

Freedom and the possibility of evil

The preacher's short answer is that God did not create evil; he created choice. Real freedom requires real choice, and if choice is real, then the possibility of evil is real too. He uses The Truman Show to picture a life that looks safe and comfortable but is actually a gilded cage. God, he argues, did not want humans trapped in a fake world with no genuine relationship or real decision. He wanted people who could actually choose to be in a relationship with him.

> *Real freedom requires real choice.*
>
> — Freedom and choice

The broken world we live in

He says suffering comes from three sources: our own bad choices, other people's bad choices, and the larger condition of a world shaped by thousands of years of accumulated human failure. He gives the example of driving 80 miles an hour on a windy road in the woods and running off the road, and he also points to the harm caused by a drunk driver or a bad actor. This is why innocent people suffer, including children with cancer. Not every suffering is traceable to a single person's fault; sometimes it is part of the broken condition into which all people are born.

PARA REFLEXÃO

Discuss together

1. Why do you think the question of suffering causes some people to walk away from Christianity?
2. How does the idea of real freedom requiring real choice change the way you think about evil?
3. In what ways is The Truman Show a helpful picture of a life without genuine freedom?
4. Which of the three sources of pain described by the preacher do you see most clearly in your own life or community?
5. Why is the question of innocent suffering, like childhood cancer, so emotionally difficult to answer?

Pain as a warning system

The preacher turns to Dr. Paul Brand, a leprosy specialist who discovered that leprosy is not mainly a disease of the skin but of the nerves. The real danger was that people could not feel pain. Without pain, they cut themselves without noticing, burned themselves, broke bones, and even kept walking on damaged feet until the damage became irreversible. He says this reveals that pain is actually the warning system of our body. Even the irritation that makes your eyes water and causes you to blink is part of that mercy. In this way, pain is not always a curse; sometimes it is a gift that protects life.

> *the absence of pain is actually what's doing it,*
>
> — Paul Brand on pain

> *pain is actually the warning system of our body.*
>
> — Pain as mercy

Suffering that seems useless

He admits this does not fully explain suffering that feels pointless, such as the death of his sister-in-law at age 30 after battling cancer for nine months. That loss left behind two small children, affected his wife Brenda deeply, and even led him and his family to take the children into their home. He says he was preaching through his own grief, trying to understand how to live with what had happened. For him, the question was not abstract; it was personal, pastoral, and ongoing.

REFLEXÃO

Where does suffering feel most confusing?

Consider a grief or injustice in your own life that does not fit neatly into a simple explanation.
Ask yourself whether you have been treating pain only as an enemy, or whether you can also see it as a warning, a mercy, or a sign that the world is broken.
Reflect on whether your hardest questions about God are shaped more by theory or by personal loss.

Seeing what God sees

He tells the Mississippi paddleboat illustration: passengers in a fog think the captain is reckless because the boat does not slow down, so they begin to mutiny. But when one man reaches the deck and sees through the fog, he can see the riverbanks and understands why the captain kept going. That becomes a picture of faith for the preacher: if he could see what God sees, he would choose what God has chosen. He does not claim this answers everything, but it helped him trust God with his sister-in-law's death.

> *if I could see what God sees, I would choose what God has chosen.*
>
> — Faith in perspective

Job's suffering and trust

The sermon then moves to Job, whose story begins with cosmic realities we do not see and then follows his life through wave after wave of suffering. Job never receives a full explanation; instead, God calls him to trust. The preacher highlights Job's

powerful confession: "though he slay me, though God kills me, I will still trust him." He presents this not as easy comfort, but as a statement of deep faith in the middle of unanswered suffering.

> *though he slay me, though God kills me, I will still trust him.*
>
> — Job's confession

Daniel's three friends in the furnace

The preacher also points to Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who are thrown into a fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar because they refused to bow to the king's idol. The shocking moment is that the king sees a fourth figure in the fire, "like a son of the gods." The point is not that faith prevents all suffering, but that God is with his people in suffering. The furnace does not take them out; God meets them in it. That presence changes the story, and even leads Nebuchadnezzar toward belief.

PARA REFLEXÃO

Ponder the biblical examples

1. What do Job and Daniel's friends teach about God's presence in suffering?
2. Why might God choose to be with people in the fire rather than always remove the fire?
3. How does the Mississippi fog illustration help explain trusting God without full understanding?
4. What makes Job's statement of trust so powerful in the face of loss?
5. How does Nebuchadnezzar's reaction show that suffering can become a witness to others?

APLICAÇÃO PRÁTICA

Living with the sermon's challenge

When you face pain, remember the preacher's concrete examples: the 80-mile-an-hour road, the leprosy patient who cannot feel pain, the paddleboat in the Mississippi fog, Job, and the furnace in Daniel. Ask whether your present suffering is coming from your choices, someone else's choices, or a broken world.

Do not assume that God's love means immediate rescue. The sermon insists that sometimes God's answer is his presence, like the fourth figure in the furnace.

When you are tempted to demand a full explanation, practice trust like Job. When you feel trapped in fog, remember the captain's perspective. When life hurts, remember that pain may be warning you, protecting you, or calling you to endure.

REFLEXÃO

How would you respond in the fire?

If you lost something precious, would your first response be anger, confusion, or trust?
Would you still believe God is good if he did not explain himself to you?
What kind of freedom do you actually want: a safe cage, or real choice with real relationship?
Where might God already be present with you in suffering, even if you cannot yet see it?

APLICAÇÃO PRÁTICA

Questions for a group or family

Talk honestly about one place where you feel the question "Why does a child get cancer?" or "Why do innocent people suffer?" is still unresolved.
Share one situation where pain warned you, redirected you, or protected you.
Identify one person who is currently in a "furnace" moment, and think of a practical way to be present with them rather than offering shallow answers.

ORAÇÃO

A prayer for trust in suffering

God, we bring you our unanswered questions, our grief, and our fear. Help us trust you when we cannot see the whole picture. Teach us that real freedom is worth the risk of choice, and that your presence is still with us in the fire. Give us grace to endure suffering, wisdom to learn from pain, and faith like Job's when our world does not make sense. Amen.