

Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷ 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

¹⁸ His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

“How Can a Loving God Allow Suffering?”
Discussion Questions

1. What has been your personal experience with suffering (illness, loss, betrayal, disappointment, etc.)?
2. In your experience, what helped you best to endure an extended period of trial or to grow through your grief or loss?
3. How has your experience with suffering affected your understanding of and/or your relationship with God?
4. Pastor Jim made the statement that "while God may not be the source of evil or suffering -- He has ultimately taken responsibility for it." What does that statement mean to you? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

If you would like to discuss the subject of God and suffering further with Pastor Jim Birchfield, feel free to email him at jbirchfield@fpchouston.org.

If you want to learn more on this topic, check out the resources below:

- *The Reason for God* (Chapter 2), by Tim Keller
- *Reading with Deeper Eyes: The Love of Literature and the Life of Faith*, by Will Willimon— Chapter “The Blood of the Lamb”
- *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*, by Tim Keller
- *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows through Grief*, by Gerald Sittser