



## Syllabus

### **THE 470: Theology of Suffering** **Genesis Bible Institute**

#### *COURSE DESCRIPTION*

Everybody hurts. We may suffer at the hands of our fellow man, as a result of our own weakness, by God's discipline, by forces beyond our control, or even as a consequence of ignoring good principles. No matter the cause, everyone experiences pain. God can indeed stop our suffering, but he often doesn't, even despite our fervent prayers of deliverance. This can prompt the question, "If God is a good and loving God, why does he allow his children to suffer?" Whatever the origin of our pain, we can take comfort in the assurance that if God allowed it, he has a purpose for our suffering.

In this course, pastor Timothy Keller walks us through the theology of suffering, addressing the causes and purposes of pain, the hope we have in Jesus and how we can minister healing to those who are hurting.

Bad things do happen to good people, but as we will learn, our bad things work out for good, our good things cannot be taken away and the best things are yet to come.

#### *LEARNING OUTCOMES*

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain the causes of suffering;
- Give a Biblical account of responses to suffering;
- Minister to people in the midst of suffering using Biblical support;
- Differentiate between the needs of direct sufferers and indirect sufferers;
- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of varying theodicies regarding suffering;
- Defend the Christian view of suffering when pitted against other religions or secular views;
- Explain why "free will" does not beget suffering;
- Describe the marks of affliction;
- Support the fact that Jesus is our hope in the midst of pain and suffering;
- Be able to quote two Bible verses from memory: 1 Peter 1:6-7.

#### *REQUIRED READING*

Study Guide: *Hope in the Midst of Suffering*.

Keller, Timothy. *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*. New York: Penguin, 2013. Print.

### ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

- Study Guide Answers (60 points / 60% of grade)**  
After you read the Study Guide and *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*, you will answer questions related to the content of each unit. The assignment is designed to help you interact with the text and understand its content. There is a total of 60 questions. Each answer is worth 1 point.
- Assignment 1: Things That Helped (15 points / 15% of grade)**  
This assignment will help you determine what is helpful and what is not helpful in the midst of your suffering, which will also help you minister to others during their times of suffering. You will create a pair of lists categorizing others' words and actions in response to your suffering. One list will record helpful words/actions and the other will record unhelpful words/actions. You will also write a brief essay to summarize your findings.
- Assignment 2: A Letter from Jesus (15 points / 15% of grade)**  
Suppose you were to receive a letter from Jesus during a time you experienced immense suffering. What might he say? How might he comfort you? In this assignment you will compose a letter to yourself from Jesus. The letter should address questions you may have had, comforting words and hope for the future.
- Final Exam (10 points / 10% of grade)**  
The Final Exam consists of true/false and multiple-choice questions. You will also write out your two memory verses. This exam is intended to measure your knowledge of course concepts.

Summary of Assignments and Grading		
Study Guide Answers	60 points	60%
Things That Helped	15 points	15%
A Letter from Jesus	15 points	15%
Final Exam	10 points	10%
Total	100 points	100%