

A book for your small group to study

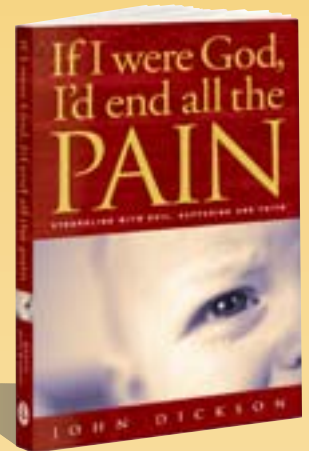
Recent horrific events around the world have brought some big questions to the forefront of people's thinking. How could a God who loves us allow such terrible suffering to take place? Or is God powerless to stop it?

John Dickson's new book, *If I were God, I'd end all the pain*, deals with these questions in a frank and realistic manner. In a short, easy to read discussion, John looks at how different religions explain suffering before turning to what the Bible says about the character of God, justice, and the end of all suffering.



At only 70 pages, this book is an ideal way of studying the problem of pain and suffering in your small group or on your own. To help you do this, we have offered some questions that the group could address over three separate sessions.

(If you wish to use this page, feel free to photocopy it.)



Session 1

Read pages 9-32 of *If I were God* (either before meeting, or together if you have lots of time)

1. What aspects of God's character do suffering and pain cause us to question?
2. Does the problem of suffering challenge the very existence of God? Why/why not?
3. Summarize the Hindu view of suffering. What are its strengths and weaknesses?
4. Summarize the Muslim view of suffering. What are its strengths and weaknesses?
5. Summarize the atheist view of suffering. What are its strengths and weaknesses?
6. What personal questions do you have about suffering? Which views help you to make sense of it?

Session 2

Read pages 33-51 of *If I were God*

1. Are human beings permitted to ask God why he allows suffering? What does the Bible say?
2. Who brings about evil in the world: God or human beings?
3. Would it be better if God did not give human beings their own wills?
4. What reasons might there be for God NOT overriding human will, even when the outcome is terrible?
5. Describe the differences between the way God will bring about justice and the way humans try to bring about justice.
6. God is delaying his judgement of the world. What does this tell us about what he values?

Session 3

Read pages 53-72 of *If I were God*

1. What does the Bible say about the future of the world?
2. How does the resurrection of Jesus help us to understand what the future holds in store?
3. In what ways has God shared in the pain that human beings experience?
4. Why did Jesus suffer pain on the cross? What did it achieve?
5. What invitation does God make to everyone who is suffering in this world?
6. Your friend at work is reading the paper and says, "There's no way God could exist with all this happening in the world!" What do you say in response?