

# If I were God...



I'd end all the pain

I'd make myself clearer

I'd make the good times last forever

**Bible Studies**

**for 1:1, individuals or groups**

Welcome to If I Were God ...

This short series of studies accompanies the teaching series If I Were God ... at Trinity Mount Barker in 2018.

These studies are intended to be done *before* the sermon on the same topic, although of course, you can do them any way that is helpful to you!

If you're using these studies in a **Bible Study Group**, try to make sure you've read the passage and done your preparation before you meet. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but also to the other members of your group.

If you're a **Bible Study Group Leader** please don't feel that you need to work your way through each and every question in the studies. With such a wide variety of ages and personalities in our church, we have included a number of different types of questions, including some which reflect on the same points, just from a slightly different perspective. *Please choose the questions most appropriate for your group.* Where there are multiple introductory questions, usually only one or two need to be considered.

If you're doing these studies **individually**, why not let someone know that you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

Always surround your time looking into God's Word with prayer, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with all God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Recommended Reading:**

If I Were God I'd End All The Pain	John Dickson	Matthias Media
If I Were God I'd Make Myself Clearer	John Dickson	Matthias Media
The Problem of Pain	C S Lewis	HarperOne
Jesus Among Other Gods	Ravi Zacharias	Word

# If I Were God I'd End All The Pain

What are some of the different circumstances in which people endure pain and suffering today?

What appears to be the cause of this suffering?

A friend says to you, "With so much suffering in the world, there's obviously no God."

How do you respond?

Do you think it's right for humans to ask God why he allows suffering and pain?

Read the following passages. Which one resonates most with your thinking about pain and suffering?

**2 Corinthians 1:3 - 5**

**Romans 5:1 - 5**

**Revelation 21:1 - 4**

### **Read Genesis 3**

What does this passage say about the cause of pain and suffering?

Scholar and author C S Lewis observed: *“God whispers to us in our pleasures; speaks to us in our conscience; but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”*

How do you think the world around us would respond to that statement?

### **Read Romans 5:1 - 5 again.**

The word translated “rejoice” in verses 2 & 3 literally means “boast.”

What might Paul have in mind when he speaks of boasting in suffering?

Can you recall any times when suffering has shaped you in the way that Paul describes here?

How can a Christian view suffering differently to a non-Christian?

What is the hope held out here for people who are suffering?

Even terrible instances of evil can be used by God for his purposes - the crucifixion of Jesus being the ultimate example.

How might this reality shape our thinking about evil and suffering?

For what reasons might God not over-rule human decision-making even though suffering is the result of those decisions?

**Read Revelation 21:1 - 4 again**

Why do you think, that out of everything God could have shown John about the heavenly city, he includes this promise of an end to suffering and sadness?

How does God's solution to the problem of pain and suffering differ to the way the world would seek a solution?

# If I Were God I'd Make Myself Clearer

If someone were to sculpt a statue of you, what pose would they choose?  
What would the inscription on the plaque say?

Pretend you have to develop a new religious movement. You want to make it as appealing as possible and get many people following it. In 3 minutes, put down as much detail as you can about your religion; what it's about, what's the focus, what's required, then share with the group why you made it the way you did.

## **Read Acts 17:16 - 34**

Why do you think Athens' abundance of idols made Paul feel "greatly distressed"?

How would you answer someone who says God doesn't care what you believe, as long as you're sincere?

Can you state the theme of Paul's speech at the Areopagus in one or two sentences?

How has God overlooked “such ignorance” (v 30) in the past?

**Read Acts 4:8 - 12**

Thinking about the statements in Acts 4 & 17, how does the resurrection of Jesus prove that he is the only way to be in a right relationship with God?

How do you think a person gets to a point where they believe Peter’s statement in verse 12?

Can you think of any other places in the Scriptures where the unique place of Jesus in revealing God or reconciling us to God is presented?

Stephen Lowe, the Anglican Bishop of Hulme in the UK, commented in 2008 *“Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs are learning to respect one another’s paths to God and to live in harmony. This demand for the evangelisation of people of other faiths contributes nothing to our communities.”*

How would you use Acts 17 to show the bishop the error in his statement?

George Tyrell a famous Catholic scholar, observed that people who search for "new" gods tend to find gods that are remarkably similar to the searchers themselves!

Why is this such a significant problem?

In what ways does living in a multicultural society place additional challenges in the way of evangelism?



# If I Were God I'd Make The Good Times Last Forever

Can you think of a situation where you didn't follow the instructions for some item that you used?

What was the outcome?

Who is the person you know who seems most truly happy?

What makes them so happy?

Think of the people you mix with every day. How and where do they look for pleasure?

Why do people so often seem to miss out on pleasure and happiness?

Christians sometimes talk about finding pleasure in Christ. What do you think they mean?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism starts with this statement: *Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.*

What does it mean to enjoy God?

### **Read Ecclesiastes 1 & 2**

Can you think of any books, TV shows, movies, etc, that deal with themes similar to those raised here?

In what ways are the issues dealt with in the same way? Differently?

How does the Teacher describe himself and his quest?

How would you describe the Teacher's perspective in chapters 1 & 2:1 - 11?

What changes in the Teacher's perspective from verses 12 - 26 of chapter 2.

The Teacher concludes that meaning must come from outside of ourselves and our own endeavours. How does the Christian worldview speak to this conclusion?

In what ways have you seen that life apart from Jesus is destined to be “meaningless”?

If you were able to ask the Teacher what is the best way to enjoy life in the 21st Century, what do you think he might say?

Can you think of any occasions in the gospels where Jesus speaks about finding meaning, purpose or enjoyment in life?

How do we make sure that we don’t spend our lives “chasing after the wind”?

How might you respond to a friend who says they don’t want to follow God’s plan for pleasure and happiness.

A little while later the same friend says, “I want lasting pleasure and happiness.” What do you say to them now?



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