



Credible Catholic

CC CREDIBLE CATHOLIC

PRESENTATION 7

STUDENT WORKBOOK

**WHY WOULD AN ALL-LOVING GOD
ALLOW SUFFERING?**

12+ Through Adult Version



From content by:

Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, S. J., Ph.D.

Adapted by: Claude R. LeBlanc, M.A.

Welcome to CREDIBLE CATHOLIC!

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? It is unbelief and skepticism. In our culture, derision of religion, God, the soul, Jesus, and the prospect of finding spiritual meaning in suffering, are not only tolerated but preached and sometimes even celebrated. Many are already infected by the faulty messages which are delivered in four popular, but inaccurate, secular myths. These myths, in one form or another, are as follows:

Myth 1: Science and faith are incompatible, and since science is true, it has replaced religion.

Myth 2: Human beings are like every other animal—merely a complex of atoms and molecules. We have no soul, no eternal destiny, and no transcendent nature. When we die, we die.

Myth 3: There is no explanation for why an all-loving God would allow suffering. Therefore, suffering is fundamentally negative and a loving God probably does not exist.

Myth 4: There is no evidence for Jesus as an historical figure, and therefore his resurrection or divinity. If Jesus did exist, he was just an interesting prophet, but not a Savior or the Son of God.

The *2016 Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study* indicates that over 40% of millennials have abandoned their faith to unbelief because these four challenges have not been adequately addressed. Unless we specifically and effectively address these challenges to faith, the percentage will continue to grow. *What can be done?*

OUR SOLUTION: *Credible Catholic*, a Magis Center curriculum correlated to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, was specifically created to address these challenging myths.

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CREDIBLE CATHOLIC 7 ESSENTIALS

PRESENTATION 7 WORKBOOK

WHY WOULD AN ALL-LOVING GOD ALLOW SUFFERING?

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From content by:

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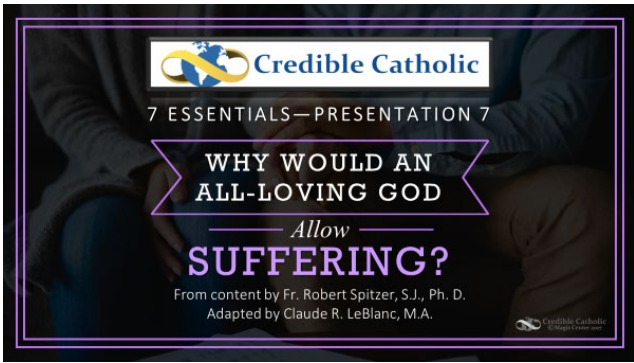
Garden Grove, CA 92840

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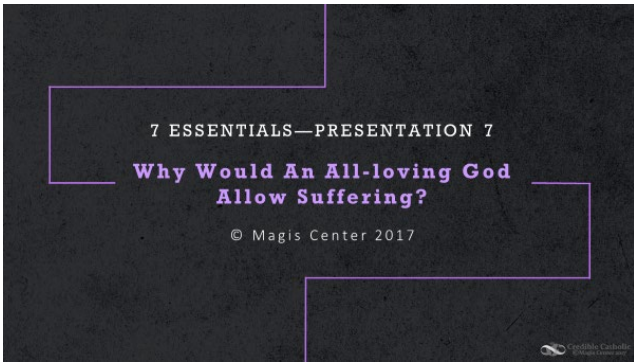
CC 7E Presentation 7: *Why Would
an All-loving God Allow Suffering?*

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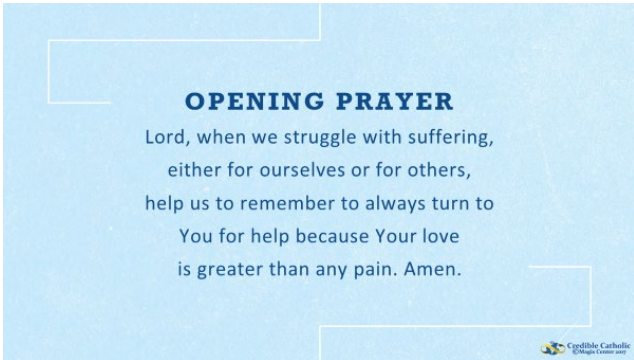
PRESENTATION NOTES



SLIDE 1—TITLE SLIDE

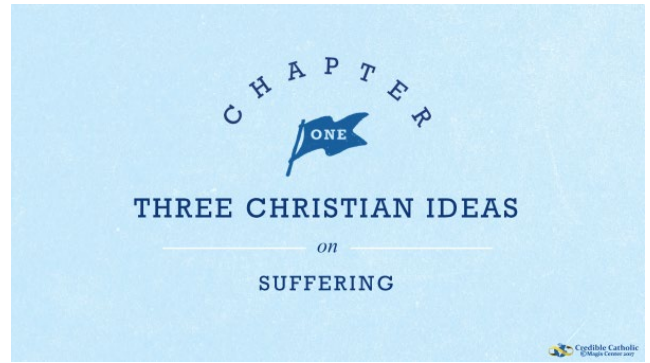


SLIDE 2—COPYRIGHT SLIDE

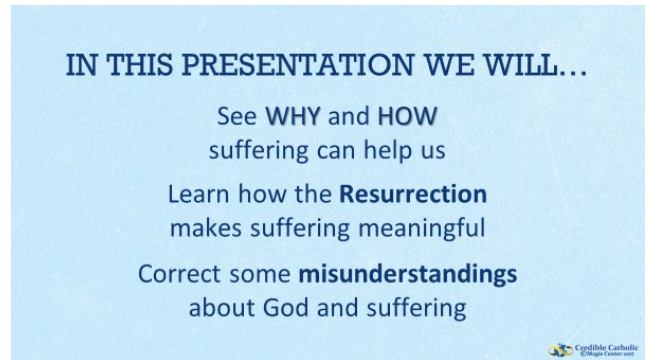


SLIDE 3—OPENING PRAYER

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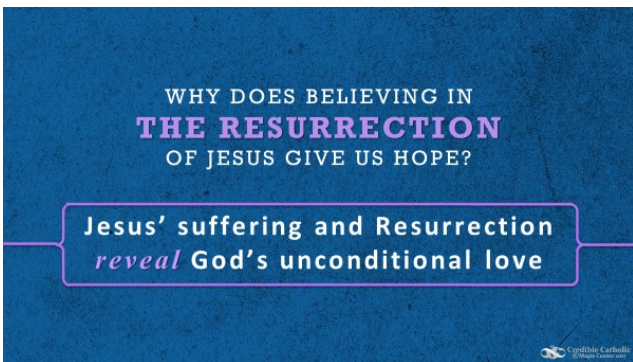
SLIDE 4—CHAPTER 1—THREE CHRISTIAN IDEAS ON SUFFERING: Suffering is something we naturally try to avoid, *but should we?* Jesus taught us that suffering can help us grow in love *and* it can help us gain salvation.



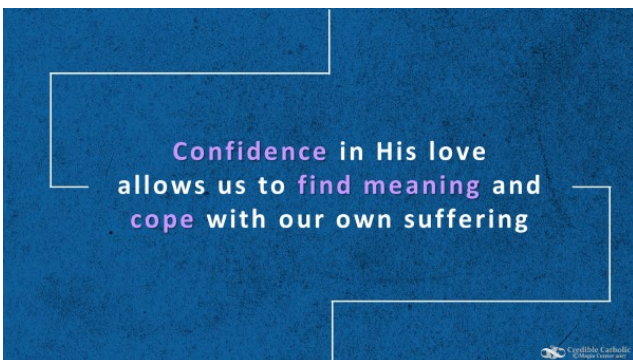
SLIDE 5: In this presentation, we’re going to learn why and how suffering can help us. But first, we need to understand why the Resurrection makes suffering meaningful, and then we also need to correct some common misunderstandings about God and suffering.



SLIDE 6: We've seen evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus' Resurrection not only confirmed His claim that He is God, but also gave validity to His promise, in the Gospels, that *we would rise*, too. So, we can *hope* in our own resurrection and the *possibility* of eternal life with God. That hope makes suffering meaningful! In fact, *the more confident we are in our resurrection, the more meaningful our suffering will be.*

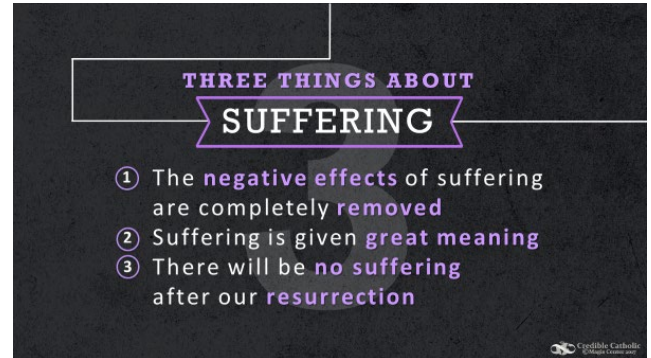


SLIDE 7: *Why does believing in the Resurrection of Jesus give us hope in our own resurrection and the possibility of eternal life with God? Because, the Resurrection of Jesus, and the suffering He endured for our sake, perfectly reveal God's unconditional love for us.*



SLIDE 8: Due to our weakness and failings, God's unconditional love *is our only hope* for salvation. Christ's willingness to suffer so much to save us

helps us understand the role suffering plays in our lives. God will do *anything* to bring us to eternal life, and confidence in His love allows us to find meaning and cope with our own suffering.



SLIDE 9: The Resurrection makes three things clear about suffering: First, the negative effects of suffering are completely removed; Second, suffering is given great meaning; and Third, there will be no suffering after our resurrection. Let's take a closer look at each of these.



SLIDE 10: 1) *The negative effects of suffering are completely removed in the resurrection.* Because our lifetimes are limited, so is our suffering. Experiencing God's unconditional love in Heaven makes the suffering of our lives, no matter how tragic, seem like it was just for an instant. If we seek God with a sincere heart and try to do His will, we can have confidence, in spite of our suffering, of being resurrected into this eternal joy free of the sufferings of this life!

Notes: _____



SLIDE 11: Here's a video of a woman who finds meaning even in her suffering as a quadriplegic.



SLIDE 12—VIDEO 7-1: God's Purpose for Suffering.



SLIDE 13—ACTIVITY 1: Understanding God's Purpose for Suffering



SLIDE 14: 2) *Suffering Has Great meaning.* Even though suffering causes pain, loss, grief, and other

hurts, Jesus viewed it as necessary and valuable. *Why?* Because, with faith, suffering can lead us toward salvation. *How does this work?*

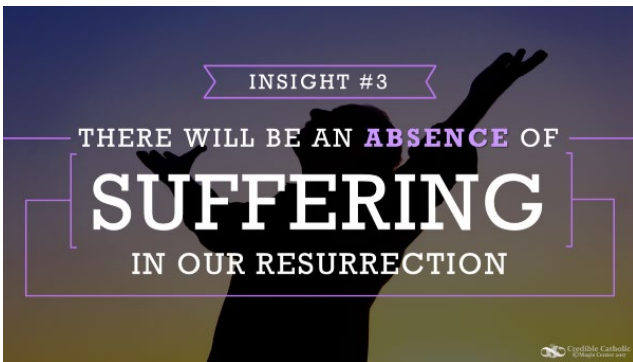


SLIDE 15: Basically, suffering provides us with six important opportunities. First, to move away from selfishness and focus on others; second, to grow in our trust in God; third, to recognize our neediness and dependence on God and others.

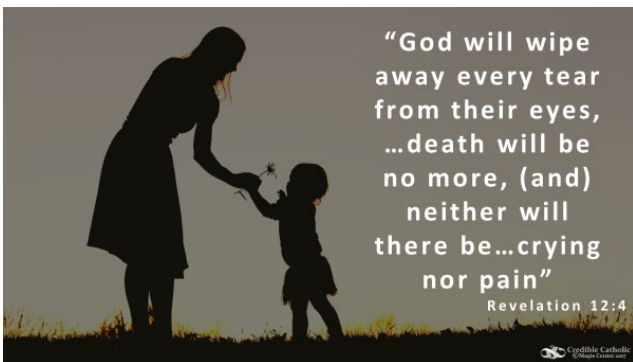


SLIDE 16: Fourth, to grow in natural virtues, or good habits, virtues like: endurance, courage, wisdom, clear-thinking, and self-control; fifth, to purify and deepen our love; and sixth, to serve others and build the Kingdom of God. Suffering gives us opportunities to do all these things; opportunities we might not have otherwise.

Notes: _____



SLIDE 17: 3) *There will be an absence of suffering in our resurrection.* In the Book of Revelation, we're told: "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, ...death will be no more, (and) neither will there be...crying nor pain." (Rev 21: 4-5)



SLIDE 18: In other words, there will be no suffering *after* our resurrection! This matches the description of Heaven indicated in thousands of NDEs. Hope in a pain-free life after death puts our present suffering in context. God wants to make use of every bit of our temporary suffering to bring us, and others through us, into the eternal peace, joy, and love of His Kingdom.



SLIDE 19: This is why understanding suffering is so closely tied to how we understand God. If we don't think of God as loving us unconditionally, then, when we suffer, we'll probably feel alone and confused and may even lose faith in Him. Jesus used the

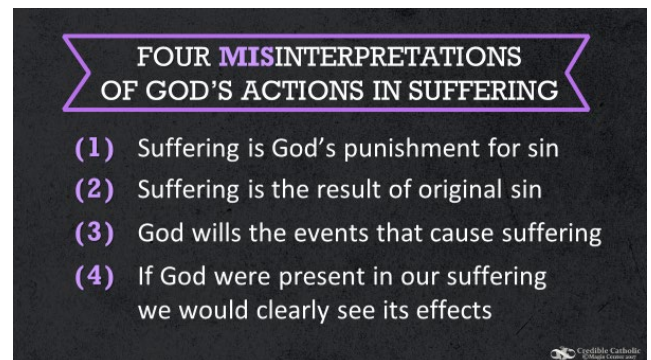
Parable of the Prodigal Son to demonstrate how much God loves us and why we should relate to Him as *Abba*; our *Father*, even our *Daddy*.



SLIDE 20: Here's a retelling of that parable.

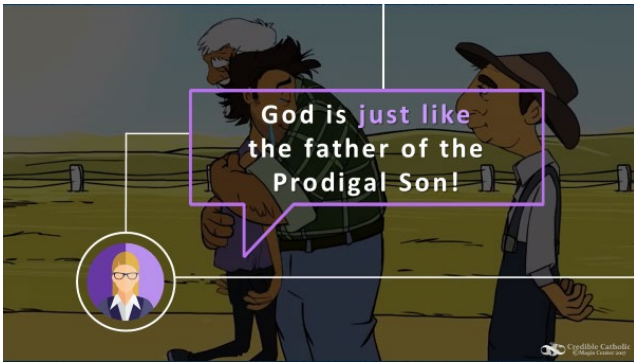


SLIDE 21—VIDEO 7-2: The Prodigal Son.



SLIDE 22: If we don't know what Jesus revealed about God, we may *wrongly* think of suffering as God's way of keeping us in line, punishing us, being disgusted with our lack of progress, or just not caring about us.

Notes: _____



SLIDE 23: None of these ideas are compatible with the Christian teaching of the God of love. Instead, Jesus wants us to know that *God is just like the father of Prodigal Son!*



SLIDE 24: Let's look at these misinterpretations of suffering.



SLIDE 25: First, that “suffering is God’s punishment for sin.” For most of Israel’s history, suffering was thought to be God’s punishment for sin (Job 3:1-25). But, Jesus revealed God as the unconditionally loving and forgiving Father of the Prodigal Son; a father who does not directly inflict suffering as a punishment. Instead, He “makes the sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.” (Mt. 5:45) In other words, we all receive blessings, and we all endure suffering in this world.

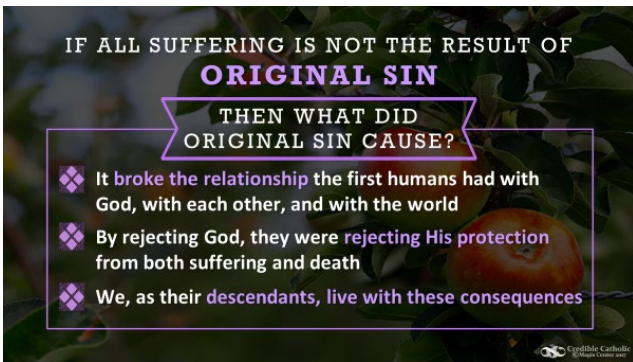


SLIDE 26: This brings us to the second misinterpretation, that “suffering is the result of Original Sin and nothing more.” In chapter 3 of Genesis, we find the story of Adam and Eve disobeying God by eating the forbidden fruit. This *Original Sin* caused them to lose their connection to God and brought suffering and death into their lives.



SLIDE 27: Some misinterpret Genesis and think *all* suffering in the world was the result of Original Sin, but this is not true. Life on earth existed much earlier than the first humans, including other human-like species, and these species experienced suffering and death before the Original Sin of humans.

Notes: _____



SLIDE 28: *If all suffering is not the result of Original Sin then what did Original Sin cause?* It broke the relationship the first humans had with God, each other, and the world, causing them to suffer and eventually die. By rejecting God, they were rejecting His protection from these things. We, as their descendants, live with the consequences the first humans caused by disobeying God, including suffering and death.

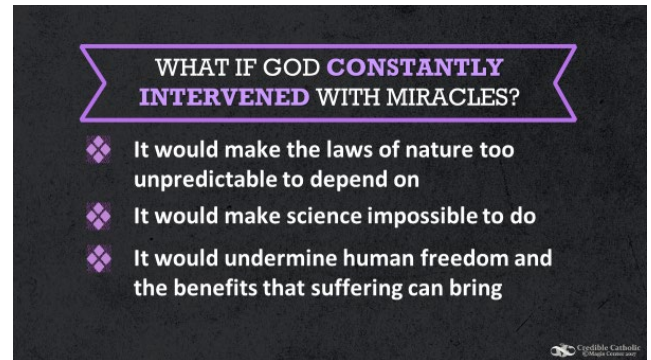


SLIDE 29: Instead of punishing us, God wants to *rescue* us from the consequences of Original Sin and also *forgive* our personal sins. That’s why He sent His only Son, Jesus, into the world to suffer and die, so that we might live forever with Him!

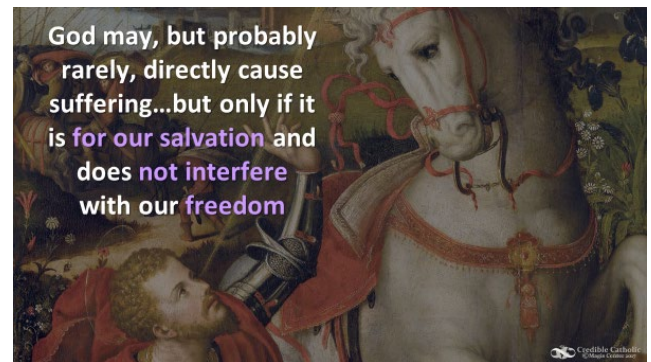


SLIDE 30: The third misinterpretation is that “God wills the events that cause suffering.” In the Old Testament, God is thought to be directly responsible for everything that happens. But, St. Thomas

Aquinas explained that after God—the first cause—created the universe, secondary causes, such as gravity, began to operate based on the conditions God created.

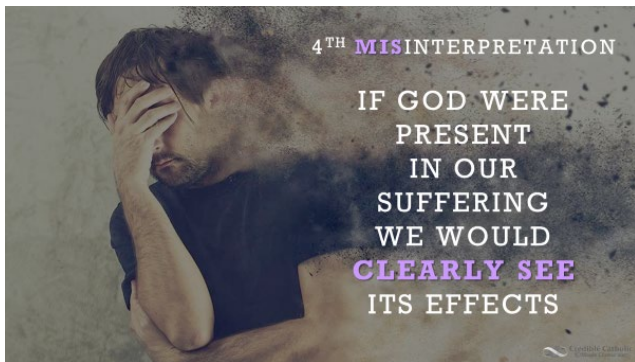


SLIDE 31: While God *can* interfere through an occasional miracle, constant interference would have many harmful effects; it would make the laws of nature too unpredictable to depend on, it would make science impossible to do, and it would undermine human freedom and undermine the benefits suffering can bring.

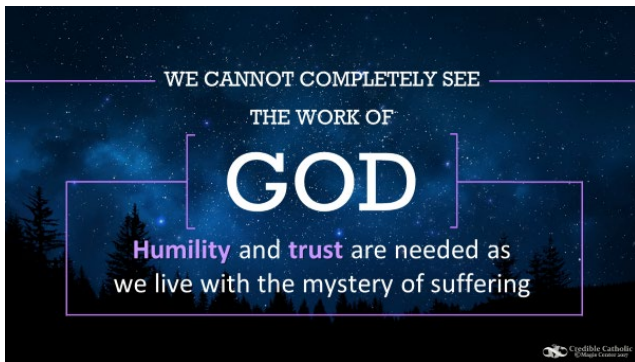


SLIDE 32: *Does God ever directly cause suffering?* Yes, but probably very rarely. In the story of St. Paul on the road to Damascus, Jesus caused Paul to be temporarily blind. God may cause suffering directly if it is for our salvation and does not interfere with our freedom. While St. Paul received a stunning wake-up call from Jesus, he still freely chose to become a Christian.

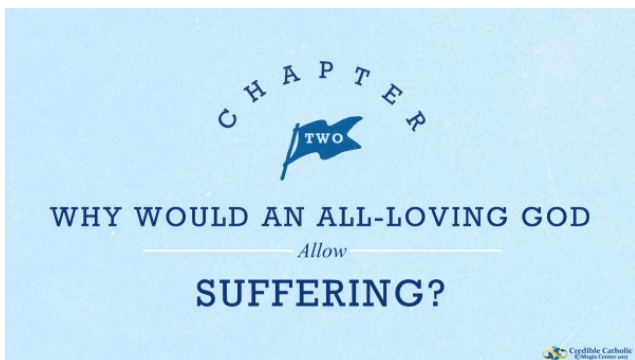
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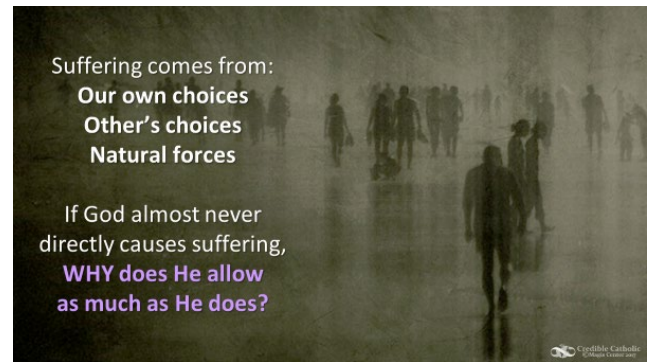
SLIDE 33: Finally, there’s the fourth misinterpretation; “If God were present in our suffering, we would clearly see its effects.” Being open to the benefits of suffering and offering it to God for the good of others and the Kingdom may make us more aware of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives.



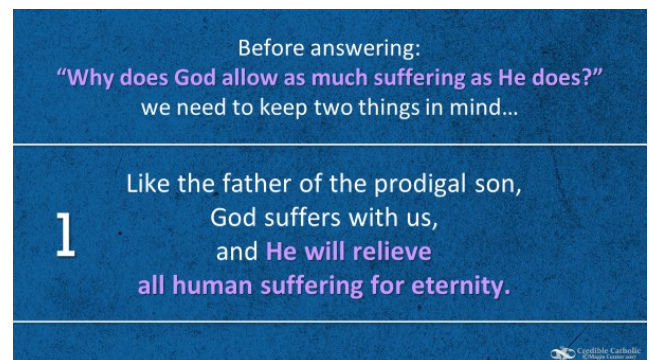
SLIDE 34: Even if we can see these benefits, however, it’s still not possible to completely comprehend the work of God. Humility and trust are always required as the basis of our relationship with God. As this relationship grows, it’s easier to endure suffering peacefully even without understanding why.



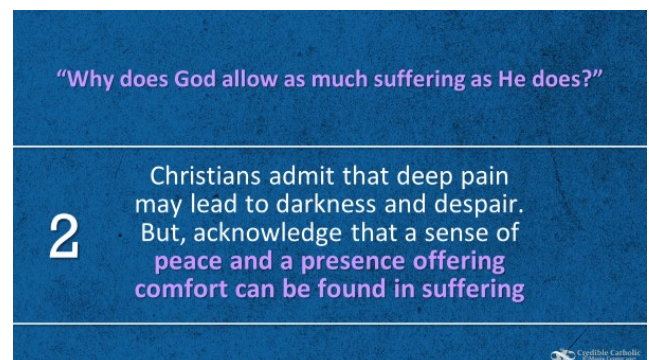
SLIDE 35—CHAPTER 2: *Why Would an All-Loving God Allow Suffering? Why would an all loving God allow suffering?*



SLIDE 36: One thing is true, suffering is unavoidable. It can come through our choices, the choices of others, and through natural forces like: earthquakes, droughts, disease, and old age. So, the next big question is: *If God almost never directly causes suffering, why does He allow as much as He does?*

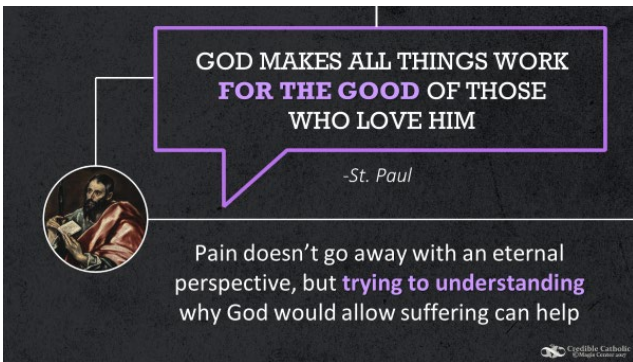


SLIDE 37: We need to keep two things in mind before answering this question. First, like the Father of the Prodigal Son, God suffers with us, and He *will* relieve all human suffering for eternity.



SLIDE 38: While Christians admit that deep pain, grief, and loss may lead to darkness and despair, we acknowledge a sense of peace that can be found in suffering and a Presence offering comfort.

Notes: _____



SLIDE 39: St. Paul reminds us that God makes all things work for the good of those who love Him. Of course, the pain of suffering does not just go away when we have an eternal perspective. But, trying to understand why God would allow suffering can help us.



SLIDE 40: First, *Why Does God Allow Humans to Cause Suffering?* We all make efforts to prevent suffering, but *does God?* Because He is all-powerful and loving, He could stop suffering when it happens, and because He is all-knowing, He could prevent it in the first place.



SLIDE 41—ACTIVITY 2: *What Would You Change if You Were God for a Day?*

Notes: _____



SLIDE 42: Because God loves us, He won't prevent or stop all suffering. True love requires freedom, and freedom means humans can cause suffering. If we don't have the choice to be unloving, the only possibility we have is to love, meaning our love wouldn't be chosen, but "programmed" by God. Without freedom, we would be like robots, who may do good things, but could not do them with love. Instead, God made us in His own image, to be *capable* of love.



SLIDE 43: Here's an explanation.



SLIDE 44—VIDEO 7-3: *Why Did God Make the World the Way He Did?*



SLIDE 45: While God rarely creates suffering directly, He also *rarely interferes* with it. Jesus gave us the *Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat* to help us understand why God allows sinners to affect the lives of the just now, but will sort them out on Judgment Day. In the parable, a farmer waits until the wheat is ready before pulling the weeds. *Why?* Removing the weeds too early could result in accidentally removing the wheat as well. In the same way, removing sinners before judgment day might cause some who would be saved, through the positive effects of their suffering, to be lost.



SLIDE 46: But, not all suffering comes from human free choice, so we also have to ask: *Why does God allow nature to cause suffering?* Not only do humans suffer from natural disasters, they suffer through genetics, bacteria, viruses, poisonous plants and animals, among other things.

Notes: _____



SLIDE 47: Suffering is necessary for most of us to grow in love and holiness. Some of the most positive human characteristics are manifested when disaster or hardship strikes. In tragedy, people work together selflessly out of compassion for others they may not even know. Tragedy provides an opportunity for growth.



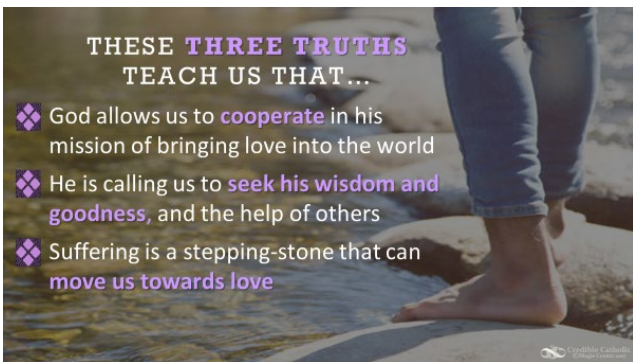
SLIDE 48: Tragedy also makes us aware of three important truths: First, *we are not God*. Suffering gives us perspective on our limitations.



SLIDE 49: Second, *we must develop our natural abilities and virtues*. These abilities often develop most when we rise to meet challenges and adversity, especially in service to others.



SLIDE 50: And third, we are but a small part of a larger, interdependent community. No one is self-sufficient, and we all need one another to live in this imperfect world.



SLIDE 51: Taken together, these three truths teach us that: There *is* a God who is capable of everything, but He allows us to cooperate in His mission of bringing love into the world by using our natural abilities, and He is calling us to seek His wisdom and goodness, and the help of others. Those who realize this find that suffering is a stepping-stone that can move us to our true, good and loving nature. This stepping-stone can help lead us to seek the Sacred and the afterlife.

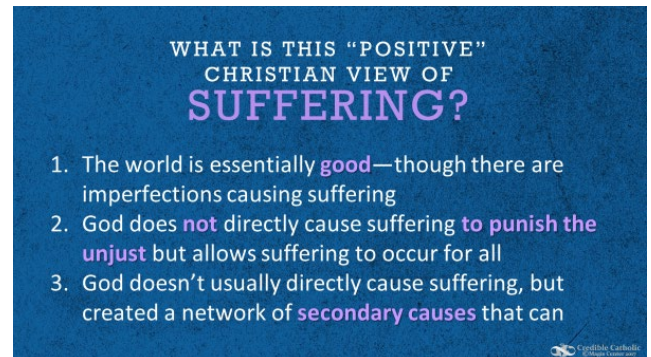


SLIDE 52: Understanding God’s wisdom and goodness allows us to see suffering in a more positive light. If we fail to see Gods wisdom and goodness, we are more likely to descend into

meaninglessness and despair, we are more likely to experience tension and conflict in our relationships, and may turn to substance abuse and other self-defeating behaviors, even suicide.



SLIDE 53: To prevent us from experiencing these things, Jesus revealed that God’s unconditional love involves sacrifice. Jesus showed this truth by suffering His own passion and death. Through self-sacrificial love, God is calling us to an abundant, joy-filled life for all eternity.



SLIDE 54: So, what is this “positive” Christian view of suffering? First, the world is essentially good, though there are imperfections in it that give rise to suffering. Second, God does not directly cause suffering to punish the unjust but allows suffering to occur in the lives of the just and the unjust. And third, God doesn’t usually directly cause suffering, but created a network of secondary causes that can.

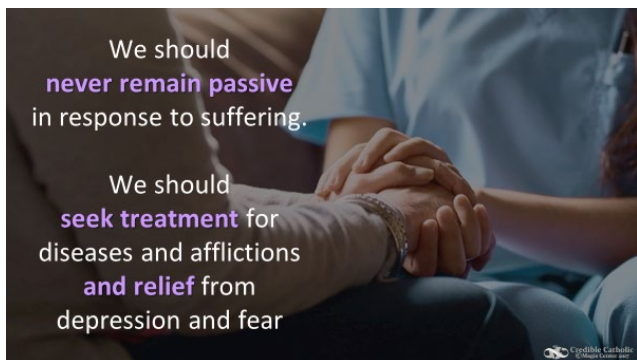
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SLIDE 55: *What then is the purpose of suffering?* Suffering helps us realize *we are not created for this life, but for eternal life in unconditional love.* Jesus gave us an example and a call through His own passion and death. He gives us gifts to help us when we suffer: guidance, inspiration, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Sacraments, community, and the Word of God.

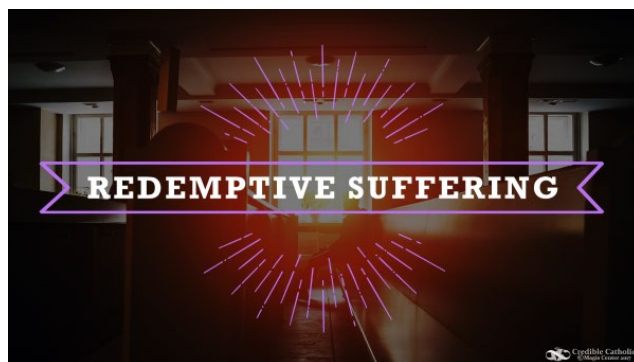


SLIDE 56: Suffering gives us opportunities to *choose* our identity and destiny. By recognizing that neither our sufferings or our earthly life are permanent, we can choose to live our lives *for eternity.* If we are open to faith and love, we will more willingly accept Jesus’ teaching in the Beatitudes, that salvation is easier for those who suffer well.



SLIDE 57: However, we should never remain passive in response to suffering, or worse, seek it out. We

should seek treatment for diseases and afflictions, and relief from depression and fear.



SLIDE 58: If suffering persists, despite our best efforts to relieve it, we can unite it with Christ’s suffering to help *others* struggling toward salvation. This “self-sacrificial” kind of love is the ultimate imitation of Jesus and is known as *Redemptive Suffering.* For those with faith, *salvation for others* may be the most important motivation in accepting suffering with peace and even joy.



SLIDE 59: Here a short video about Redemptive Suffering.

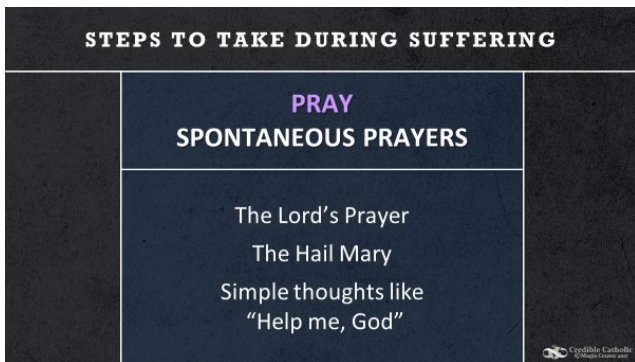


SLIDE 60—VIDEO 7-4: *Redemptive Suffering.*

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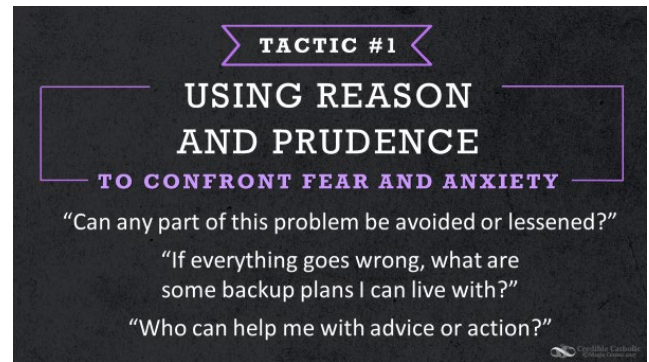
SLIDE 61—CHAPTER 3—WHAT TO DO WHEN SUFFERING COMES: There are two steps we can take to reduce the negative effects of suffering when it begins.



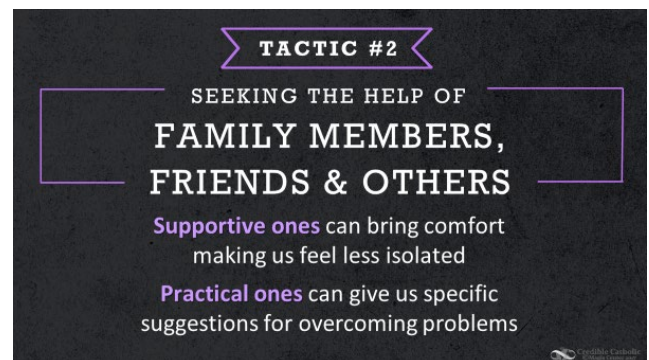
SLIDE 62: First, we can immediately pray spontaneous prayers, like the Lord’s Prayer, the Hail Mary, or even just simple thoughts, like “Help me, God”.



SLIDE 63: Second, we can develop our natural abilities and the virtues, which are good habits. By developing our natural abilities, like *reason* and *empathy*, and natural virtues, like *wisdom* and *courage*, we’ll be in a stronger position to deal with suffering, and we can reduce the effects of suffering. There are four tactics we can use to develop and use our natural abilities and virtues.



SLIDE 64: Tactic #1: “Using reason and prudence to confront fear and anxiety.” *How can we avoid living in fear and anxiety in the face of current or future suffering?* First, when we’re facing a problem, we can ask questions like: *Can any part of this problem be avoided or lessened? If everything goes wrong, what are some backup plans I can live with?* and *Who can help me with advice or action?* Then, we can use those answers to work on a solution.



SLIDE 65: Tactic #2: “Seeking the help of others” like family members, friends, and classmates, can be helpful in two ways. First, “supportive” ones can bring comfort through their love, making us feel less isolated and bringing us a sense of peace. Second, “practical” ones can give us specific suggestions and strategies for overcoming our problems. We need loving people of *both kinds* in our lives. Sometimes, we can wrongly believe that we need to be self-sufficient. This can make us hesitant to share our needs or make us struggle with the feeling that we are burdening others. If we practice sharing our feelings with trusted friends or family members, it will be easier to receive the help of others in times of crisis.

Notes: _____

TACTIC #3

RESHAPING OUR
**EXPECTATION
OF HAPPINESS**

We **can be happy** without a particular person, job, home or good health

After a loss we can find new kinds of happiness and may be **even happier** than before

SLIDE 66: Tactic #3: “Reshaping our expectations of happiness.” You may have heard it said that “happiness depends on what we think will make us happy.” Even though we may believe we cannot be happy without a particular person, job, home, or good health, it’s probably not true. Many have learned how to be happy again after losses, sometimes finding whole new kinds of happiness. *How do they do this?* They stop telling themselves they need the things they’ve lost, and start saying, “I can be happy without them.” They consciously change their view of what is required for happiness. If we do the same, we will likely find a new way of life and may be even happier than before.

TACTIC #4

AVOID
**NEGATIVE
COMPARISONS**

One **sure way to add anxiety** to our suffering is to compare ourselves with what we were like before a loss or compare ourselves to others who have not experienced the loss

SLIDE 67: Tactic #4: “Avoid Negative Comparisons.” One sure way to add anxiety to our suffering is to compare ourselves to what we were like before a loss, or compare ourselves to others who have not experienced the loss.

Notes: _____



When we find ourselves making negative comparisons, we have **three options**, we can:

1. Stay resentful and bitter,
2. We can try to tough it out alone, or
3. We can practice “Christian resignation” and place ourselves in God’s loving hands

SLIDE 68: When we find ourselves making negative comparisons, we have three options: First, we can stay resentful and bitter; Second, we can resolve to “tough it out” by ourselves; or Third, we can practice *Christian resignation* (by placing ourselves in the loving hands of God and trusting that He knows what we need and how we can best be used for the good of others).

How do we **begin** the process of Christian resignation?

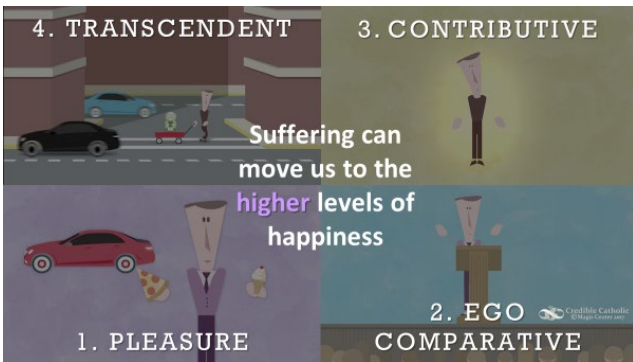


1. First, make a determined decision to **stop** whenever we catch ourselves making a negative comparison
2. Then, **pray** spontaneous prayers such as “I give up, God—you take care of it”
3. Finally, **think clearly** through our current situation

SLIDE 69: *How do we begin the process of Christian resignation?* First, make a determined decision to stop whenever we catch ourselves making a negative comparison. Then, pray spontaneous prayers in those moments, such as, “I give up, God—you take care of it” and finally, think clearly through the situation we’re dealing with.

C H A P T E R
FOUR
THE OPPORTUNITIES
Of
SUFFERING

SLIDE 70—CHAPTER 4—THE OPPORTUNITIES OF SUFFERING: Since the time of Jesus, Christians have believed that *suffering is necessary to grow in virtue*. That doesn't mean that we should seek it, but when we encounter unavoidable suffering, we should look for ways to grow from it. Let's use happiness as an example for how we can grow from suffering.

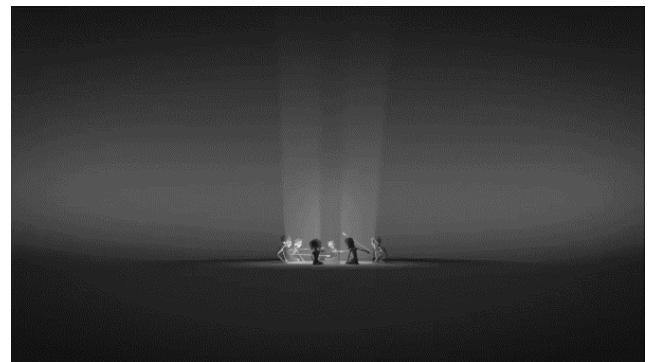


SLIDE 71: As we saw, there are four levels of happiness: First, seeking pleasure; Second, winning comparisons; Third, making a positive difference to others; and Fourth, seeking happiness with God. Suffering can move us beyond the lower levels, which focus on ourselves, to the higher levels which focus on others and God. *But how?*

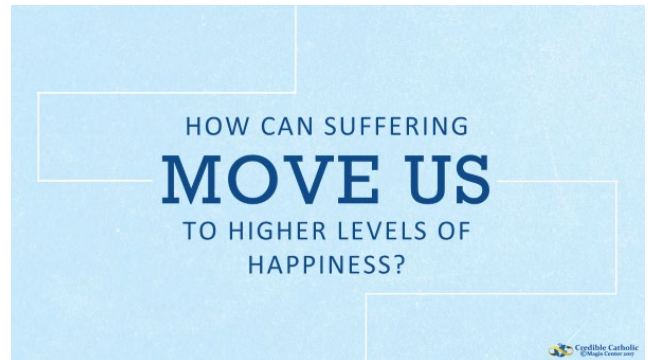


SLIDE 72: Watch this example.

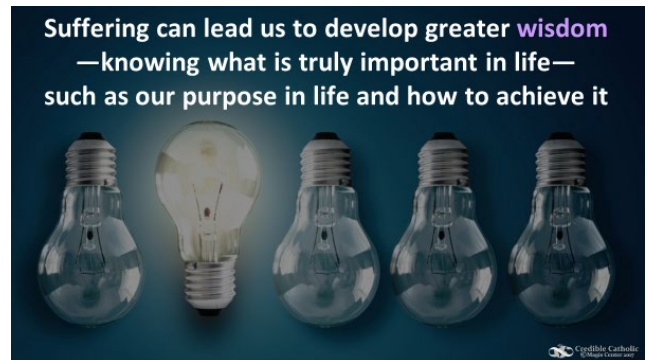
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SLIDE 73-VIDEO 7-5: *The Parable of the Long Spoons.*



SLIDE 74: So, how can suffering move us to the higher levels of happiness?



SLIDE 75: First, suffering can lead us to develop greater *wisdom*; the awareness of what is truly important and meaningful in life. *Wisdom* includes knowing our true purpose, then looking for practical ways to achieve it. Suffering can take away our physical well-being or status and help motivate us to search for our true purpose.

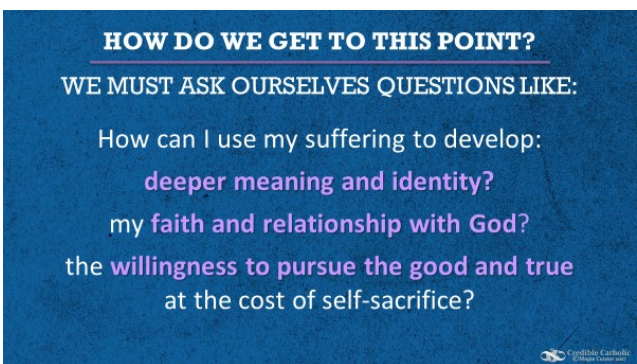


SLIDE 76: Second, suffering can lead us to develop courage and self-discipline. For most of us, it takes emptiness, weakness, or the possibility of death to move us to the higher levels of the pursuit of happiness. These are the very conditions necessary for *courage* and *self-discipline*. These virtues define our character *because* they are chosen in struggle, and so, they give proof of our true principles and ideals.

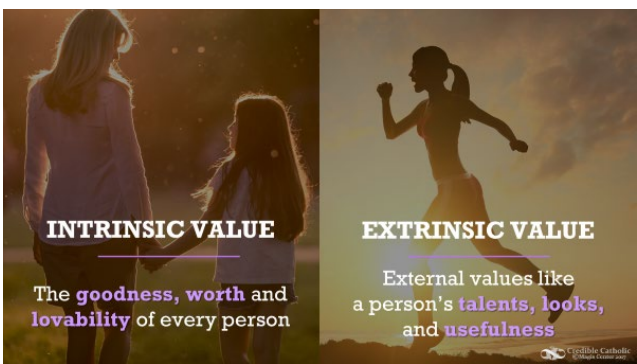


SLIDE 77: Besides the natural virtues of *wisdom*, *courage*, and *self-discipline*, suffering can also produce the religious virtue of *agapē*; the gift of self to the point of self-sacrifice. *Agapē* was demonstrated by Christ’s passion and death for our sake. In imitation of Jesus, we may reach a point in our lives when we realize we are *wasting* our suffering if we fail to seek its opportunities for growth.

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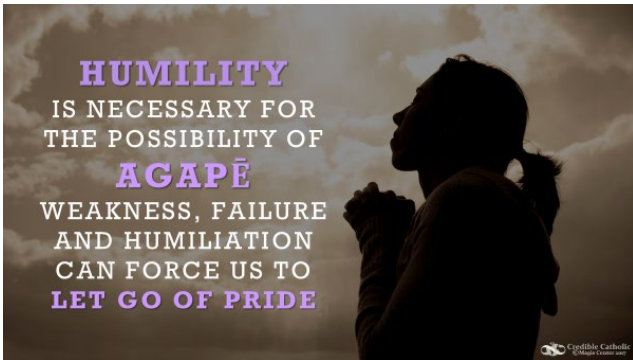
SLIDE 78: *How do we get to this point?* We can reflect on questions like: *How can I use my suffering to develop deeper meaning and identity; to develop my faith and relationship with God; to develop the willingness to pursue the good and true at the cost of self-sacrifice?*



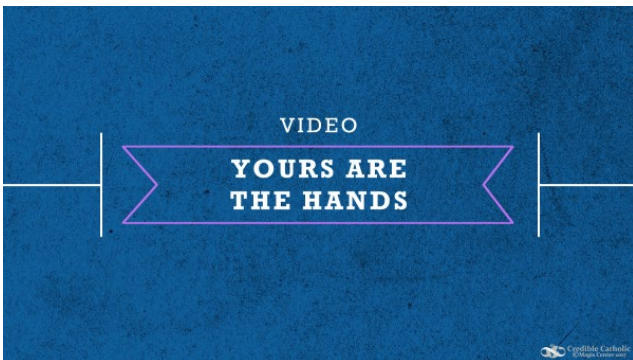
SLIDE 79: *Agapē* is a love based on empathy. It is freely given because of the God-given *intrinsic* goodness, worth, and lovability of another. This goodness does not depend on any *extrinsic* value the person might have, like their talents, looks, or usefulness.



SLIDE 80: *Agapē* seeks no reward, such as romance, friendship, or any kind of pay-back. If suffering can draw us into this kind of empathy and compassion, we will have to let go of the belief that weakness and vulnerability are essentially negative. Instead, we can accept Jesus’ revelation that suffering can be an invitation to eternal joy and love.



SLIDE 81: As Jesus taught and demonstrated, and as every saint has realized, *humility* is necessary for the possibility of *agapē*. We usually need to experience the suffering of weakness, failure, and humiliation to force us to let go of our pride, let go of our status, and success. When we do, we will discover a new freedom that was previously unimaginable.



SLIDE 82: Watch this example of *agapē* love.

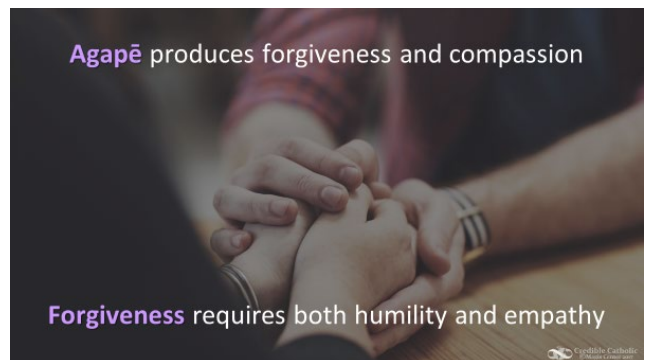
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SLIDE 83—VIDEO 7-6: Yours Are His Hands.



SLIDE 84—ACTIVITY 3: Understanding and Living *Agapē* Love.



SLIDE 85: The most important aspects of *agapē*, however, are *forgiveness* and *compassion*. *Forgiveness* requires both humility and empathy. If someone has unintentionally hurt us, it can be easily excused. But, when someone intentionally hurts us, we have the choice whether or not to forgive. *Forgiveness* is essential for restoring the possibility of love.



SLIDE 86: *Compassion* is another quality that suffering can bring out of us. Jesus taught that compassion for strangers and enemies was the highest form of love. He describes this love in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. We become like the Good Samaritan not by just doing compassionate things, but by being truly compassionate; suffering with another.

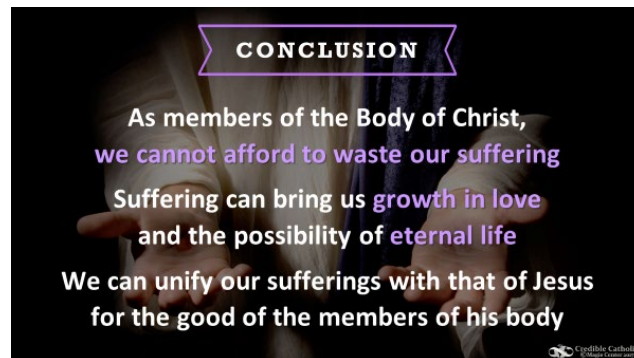


SLIDE 87: There is a catch, however; we have to be suffering in order to receive compassion. As we grow up, it becomes more and more difficult to accept compassion, but if we are compassionate to others, it will be easier for us to receive it.

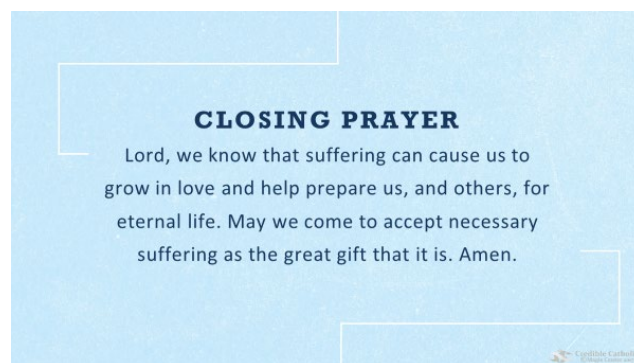


SLIDE 88—CHAPTER 5—SELF-OFFERING FOR THE KINGDOM IN IMITATION OF JESUS: St. Paul spoke about Christ’s spiritual body as the *unifying bond* of its members. He notes that “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored,

every part rejoices with it.” (1 Cor. 12:26) Each member affects the entire body, and affects each member of it. Not only are we free to cause the suffering of others, we are also able to offer our lives, especially our suffering, for the redemption of others.



SLIDE 89: In conclusion, as members of the Body of Christ, we cannot afford to waste our suffering. Besides the benefits suffering brings to ourselves—growth in love and the possibility of eternal life—we need to remember to make it a self-sacrificial offering so that we can unify our sufferings with that of Jesus for the good of the members of His Body.



SLIDE 90—CLOSING PRAYER



SLIDE 91: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

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CREDIBLE CATHOLIC—7 ESSENTIALS Presentation 7 **ACTIVITIES**

Why Would an All-loving God Allow Suffering?

ACTIVITY #1: *Understanding God’s Purpose in Suffering*

PART ONE: In the video you just watched, we heard quadriplegic Joni Eareckson Tada say: *“God is the one who has wired the world to be so difficult”* and *“He writes suffering into the script of our lives.”*

REFLECT, then DISCUSS:

1. *Do you agree with her? Has God intended that suffering be a mandatory part of our lives?*



2. *Why would God do this?*

PART TWO: She went on to say: *“God permits what He hates to accomplish what He loves.”* Why? Because He desires *“salvation for a world of sinners.”*

REFLECT, then DISCUSS:

1. *Do you agree with her? Does God desire our salvation so much that He allows suffering?*

2. *Is salvation worth all the suffering there is?*

CC 7E P7 ACTIVITIES continued, pg. 2

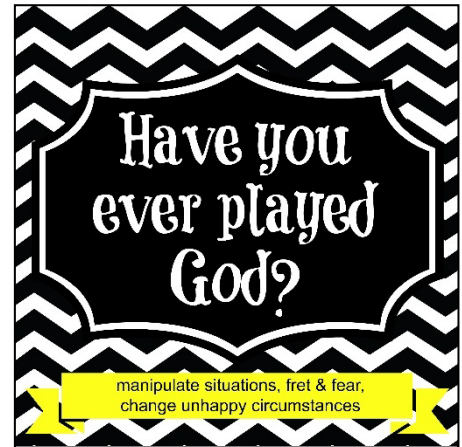
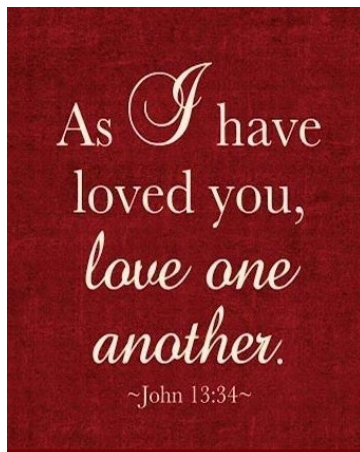
ACTIVITY #2: *What Would You Change if You Were God for a Day?*

If possible, gather into small groups and discuss the following questions:

- 1) *What would you change about the world if you were God?*

- 2) *What's "wrong" with the world the way it is? Why do you think your change be an improvement?*

- 3) *What does your change say about God and His world?*

**ACTIVITY #3: *Understanding and Living Agapē Love***

PART ONE: The video said: *“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which He looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the eyes with which He blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes. You are His body.”*

DISCUSSION: *How does this video show an example of agapē love?*

PART TWO—REFLECTION: *Is your “faith” like this? What needs to change, or what do you need to do, to make it reflect agapē love? Give examples of how you can better be the eyes, feet, and hands of Christ to others?*



THE 7 ESSENTIAL PRESENTATIONS

Essential 1—MEDICAL EVIDENCE OF A SOUL: We show evidence, from **Near-Death Experiences** (NDEs) and **Terminal Lucidity** (a clarity of consciousness sometimes occurring shortly before death in persons with dementia, Alzheimer's, and irreversible brain damage) that consciousness is not dependent on physical bodies or brains, and therefore, that we have souls that survive bodily death.

Essential 2—SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE: We give evidence from the **Big Bang**, the **BVG Proof** (that all expanding universes have to have a beginning), **entropy**, and the "**fine-tuning**" of the universe for life, that our universe requires an Intelligent Creator in order to exist.

Essential 3—PHILOSOPHICAL PROOF OF GOD'S EXISTENCE: We demonstrate, using reasoning, from **St. Thomas Aquinas**, **C. S. Lewis**, and others, the logical necessity for there being a Transcendent Creator of the universe.

Essential 4—PROOF OF JESUS' RESURRECTION AND DIVINITY: We describe evidence from the **Shroud of Turin**, the **Facecloth of Oviedo**, **Historical Documents** (biblical and non-biblical), and the work of **N. T. Wright**, that the Resurrection of Jesus is an historical fact, and that He is divine.

Essential 5—WHY BE CATHOLIC? We show that the Catholic Church is Christ's only authentic living authority, and give evidence of miracles (through the intercession of **Mary** and the **Saints**, and for the real presence of Christ in the **Eucharist**) that demonstrate God's work in the Church.

Essential 6—TRUE HAPPINESS: We explain the four kinds of happiness (coming from **pleasure**, **accomplishments**, **service of others**, and **a loving relationship with God**) and show why only the latter two can give us the pervasive, enduring, and deep happiness we truly desire and need.

Essential 7—WHY WOULD AN ALL-LOVING GOD ALLOW SUFFERING? We guide the learner to understand the **necessity**, **meaning**, and **benefits** of suffering, which are growing in the love of God, others, and ourselves, and attaining happiness for ourselves and others here, and with God for eternity in Heaven! Rev. 3-21-20