Renewing Guide: **Sin Around Me**

"All counseling is occasioned by a world that is broken by sin."[1] We can trace every reason for pain, ungodly fear, insecurity, shame, and every other aspect of suffering we face in life, back to the initial brokenness of Genesis 3. We can group this general brokenness into two basic categories: suffering that comes from outside of us and suffering resulting from our own sin. We can further break these categories into four specific aspects of suffering: ***sin around me*** (I'm suffering because I live in a sinful world), ***sin against me*** (I'm suffering because of someone else's sin), ***sin in me*** (I'm suffering because of my own sin), and ***sin with me*** (I'm suffering because I've engaged in sin with others). While there is some overlap between these categories (sometimes *sin around me* or *sin against me* leads to *sin in me* or *sin with me*), these categories help us think about how we should respond in God-honoring ways to the suffering we experience in life. Scripture speaks sufficiently to every issue of suffering we face living in a fallen world.

Sin around me began with the original sin of Adam that catapulted the entire world into a broken existence (Genesis 3:1-19). Because of the Fall, people get sick, grow old, and die. Similarly, disasters such as hurricanes, tsunamis, famine, and earthquakes in the natural world cause significant suffering even though they aren't the direct result of someone's personal sin or sin against us. We suffer as a result of living in a sin-cursed world (Romans 8:20-22) and need to learn how to respond biblically to this reality.

In our suffering we often struggle to believe the truth about God, ourselves, and our circumstances. The *Renewing Guide* on the following page offers heart-renewing truths for those facing this kind of suffering.

Use this guide in a way that best helps you in your season of suffering. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Read through the entire guide. Pick one or two truths that you find the hardest to believe right now. Write the truth on a card that you can carry with you or place somewhere you will see daily (like next to your bed or on your bathroom mirror). Refer to it often throughout the day. Even better, commit this truth to memory.
- Pray through the *Renewing Guide,* choosing one truth to talk to God about each day.
- Look up the verses listed on the *Renewing Guide* and write them out in your journal. Ask God to help you believe and act on this truth.
- If you have trouble understanding one of the truths or difficulty applying it to your life, ask a trusted adult for help.

[1] Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 225.

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Renewing Guide
Heart-renewing truth for issues of Sin Around Me

Truths about God

God loves me.
- God loves me more than I love myself. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10)
- God wants the best for my life. (Romans 8:28-30) This truth gives hope and help in renewing our mind about Who God is.

God is only good and does only good.
- God cannot be charged with evil or the desire to harm someone. It is against His nature. Anything that God does is good. (Psalm 34:8; Luke 18:19; Genesis 50:20)

God is in control/sovereign.
- Nothing escapes God's control. Nothing just "happens." Every circumstance of life is controlled and directed by God for His purpose of making us more like Jesus. (Isaiah 46:9-10; Proverb 21:1)

God is all powerful.
- There is nothing God cannot do that He wants to do. If something has happened (or not happened) it does not mean that God didn't want it to happen but couldn't stop it, but rather that God chose to allow it. (Jeremiah 32:17; Psalm 115:3)

God is all knowing.
- Nothing takes God by surprise. Nothing is unaccounted for. He knew it all before the foundation of the world. (Proverb 15:3; Matthew 10:30)

God is sufficient.
- God is all we need. He alone can and does truly satisfy. (Hebrews 13:5; 2 Corinthians 3:5)

Truths about God's View of Suffering

Suffering has a purpose. (James 1:1-8; Romans 5:3- 5)
- God uses suffering to develop our faith.
- God uses suffering to develop our endurance.
- God uses suffering to develop our character.

For the believer, suffering is not an expression of God's wrath.
- Christ paid for our sin in full. Because of Christ, we can be assured that nothing can separate us from His love.

In our suffering, we are not alone. (Romans 8:17-18; Acts 14:22)
- We share in suffering with Christ and with all who are in Christ.

Suffering is temporary. (2 Corinthians 4:18; Romans 8:18)
- Suffering is real and painful. But it is not ultimate. Suffering does not have the last word!

Truths about God's View of Me

I am a sufferer.
- My suffering is not the biggest thing about me. My suffering does not define me, rather, I am defined by my position in Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:10-12; 16-18)

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