

“Finding Hope in Injustice”

Pastor Dave Vasquez, September 24-25, 2016

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes we are challenged when trying to make sense of life in this world. Perhaps one of the most vexing questions we face is “Why does God allow His people to suffer injustice?” From the days of the first followers of Christ, there has been undeserved persecution and suffering amongst believers. Thankfully, we live in a place where we seldom experience such suffering. There are however, Christians even today, who suffer greatly for their faith. This study addresses the hope that can be found, even in times of injustice.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

Have you ever lived in another country? If so, did you find a difference in religious freedom there?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

Suffering unjustly commends us to God.

Q1. Read 1 Peter 2:18-20; Matthew 5:11-12; Luke 9:23

You might be surprised to find that the Bible tells us that we are approved by God and find favor with Him when we patiently endure undeserved suffering. What attitude and motivation does Peter tell us a slave should have when he endures suffering under a harsh master (1 Peter 2:18-19)? Under what conditions does Matthew 5:11 say we are blessed? In Luke 9:23 Jesus tells us that we are to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him daily. What is it in Matthew 5:12 that gives us cause for hope? What do you think is included in your daily life that reflects taking up the cross of Christ? If you can think of nothing, remember to pray for those whose daily lives include persecution for their faith. (See the Challenge at the end of this study)

Suffering unjustly conforms us to Christ.

Q2. Read 1 Peter 2:21; Philippians 3:8-10; 1 Peter 4:15-16

Most followers of Jesus would agree that they want to be changed and conformed to His image. Christ’s suffering of injustice on the earth gives us an example to follow (1 Peter 2:21). In his quest to know Christ, Paul was willing to lose everything. How did he summarize the purpose of losing everything in Philippians 3:10? How do you think sharing in Christ’s suffering can enhance our knowledge of him? What is one thing Peter identifies that we can praise God for in the midst of our suffering

(1 Peter 4:16)? Have you or anyone you know suffered adversity as a result of identifying with the name of Christ?

Suffering unjustly can convert others.

Q3. Read Acts 8:32-35; Luke 23:41-43; 1 Peter 3:14-16; Romans 12:19-21

What was Jesus’ reaction to being mocked and insulted by the soldiers who crucified Him (Acts 8:32b)? How did the thief on the cross react to the injustice of Jesus’ suffering (Luke 23:41-43)? This might not be our natural reaction to injustice, but what hope and what purpose do you find in suffering for righteousness’ sake in 1 Peter 3:14 - 16?

We know the God is just, and there is a day when His wrath will be released. But what does Romans 12:19-21 tell us about our rights to avenge ourselves when we are wronged? How have you seen people react to a Christian who chooses to “overcome evil with good”?

Wrap-Up

Finding hope in the midst of mistreatment seems like a contradiction, yet God shows us that there are positive results that can come to us and to others if we respond properly. We are commended by God and find favor with Him as we patiently endure undue suffering. And as we share in the sufferings of Christ, we know him on an ever-deeper level. When we respond to injustice as Christ did, in reverent fear of God, we bring glory to Him and in so doing, may even contribute to the conversion of our offenders.

Memory Verse

I want to know Christ--yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,
Philippians 3:10 NIV

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: _____

Challenge: Is there someone who mistreated you and you need to forgive? If you have an opportunity, do something to bless them. Spend a few minutes browsing the website persecuted.com (voice of the Martyrs), then pray for those being persecuted.

