

Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane was not merely over the physical pain He faced. Jesus was in agony over the sin of the world which He would die to redeem us from. Pause for a moment of prayer for the lost of this world. You may want to pray for individuals you know need redemption, or more broadly for the brokenness we see around us.

6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. - 2 Corinthians 1:6-7 NIV

The Spirit is so powerful that not an ounce of suffering will be wasted. All the pain we face is repurposed by the Spirit, as a key ingredient in the redemption of the world. We don't need to hide our suffering, instead we can allow God to use it to comfort others who are similarly suffering. *How has God comforted you in your suffering and who might benefit from your sharing your hope in Jesus with them?*

WRAP-UP

Following Jesus doesn't mean a life free from pain or hardship. Many people mistakenly believe that being a faithful Christian should lead to an easy, problem-free life, but Scripture teaches that suffering is a part of the human experience—even for believers. Instead of avoiding or denying pain, we are called to respond to it with faith, allowing God to use it to build perseverance, character, and hope. Through the Holy Spirit, even our suffering can become a powerful witness to God's love and redemption. Rather than seeing suffering as pointless or something to be avoided at all costs, we're invited to surrender it to God, trusting that none of it will be wasted and that it can serve to comfort and strengthen others and lead them to Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. - Romans 8:18 NIV

Challenge- Everyone in the world shares the experience of suffering but no one has suffered exactly like you. Write out your story and be prepared to share it with others.

Redemptive Suffering Cultivating -As You Go -Week 4

INTRODUCTION

As we learn more about our calling to go unto the world and be witnesses for Jesus, we might be making some assumptions that aren't necessarily true. Perhaps you've been led to believe that following Jesus means all our problems will be miraculously resolved, and to be a good witness you will have the perfect life, free from pain and suffering. That is not necessarily what God has promised us. Bad things will still happen to good people, even good Christian people, because to be human is to suffer. And while you may not have control over the suffering that touches your life, you do have control over what you do in response to it. You can witness to the power of the Holy Spirit in your sufferings as well as in your triumphs.

Ice Breaker

What is one thing you have suffered that you never expected would happen to you?

Key Passages

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. - Romans 5:1-5 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. False Ideas about Suffering

- False Idea #1- Avoid Suffering at all costs.

In simple terms, suffering (*Gr. pathēma*) means we feel pain or affliction. And given a choice, most people would choose to avoid pain and affliction. In fact, we might spend a good deal of energy trying to avoid

pain and affliction only to discover that there are going to be some things we just can't avoid.

What is one thing that comes to mind that causes you physical pain that you spend time or money to avoid? What is something in your life that is painful that you have no choice but to endure?

22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

- Acts 14:22 NIV

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

- John 16:33 NIV

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

- Matthew 16:24 NIV

The Bible treats suffering differently than we do. When Paul and Barnabus returned from their missionary journey they "strengthened the disciples and encouraged them" as they told them they would go through many hardships.

On that missionary trip Paul and Barnabus had been persecuted and stoned, how does Jesus' statement in John 16 help us to understand that knowing they would have many hardships could be encouraging? It is unlikely we will face the kind of persecution Paul and Barnabus faced, but Jesus said whoever wants to be His disciples must take up their cross and follow. What do you think it means for us to take up our cross today?

- False idea #2- Everything Happens for a Reason

While this statement may be true in some sense, it is usually said when we are grappling with a tragedy that seems to make no sense to us, and it is unlikely to help the person we are saying it to. Although our suffering might be a natural consequence of poor decisions on our part, often the suffering we experience is the result of living in a fallen world. Satan is the author of suffering, but God is the author of redemption, and He will bring restoration to a cursed world.

God can bring about good from what Satan intended for evil, but let's not presume God has inflicted suffering for His own purposes. Rather than saying "everything happens for a reason", what words of comfort or encouragement can we offer when someone is suffering?

2. Justified and Hope-Filled

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. - Romans 5:1-5 NIV

In order to rightly understand and endure our suffering we must be in a right relationship with God and that begins with faith. If we know Jesus as Lord, then we trust Him even when the circumstances of life make no sense. When we trust and rely on Him, we receive the gift of peace and the Holy Spirit's power needed for whatever we are facing.

The word used for glory here (*Gr. kauchaomai*) can be translated as exalt, boast or rejoice. It is first used of our hope in God's glory because we know He is the author of redemption and will restore all things in this cursed world back to His good creation. But it is also used of our boasting in our suffering because of what it ultimately produces in us.

Discuss how you've seen the process of moving from suffering to perseverance to character to hope in God's love. (character (dokimē) means having been proved trustworthy through a trial)

3. Surrendered Suffering isn't wasted

15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. - Romans 8:15-18 NIV

42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." 43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. 44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

- Luke 22:42-44 NIV

Jesus gave us the ultimate example of how to face suffering. As He approached the cross, He drew near to the Father, and although He asked if there was another way, He trusted and accepted that God's will should be done.