

Small Group Discussion Guide

“The Purpose of Suffering”

INTRODUCTION (10 minutes)

- Welcome everyone and open with prayer
- Ask members to briefly share one challenge they faced this week and how they responded to it

KEY SCRIPTURE VERSES

- Isaiah 53:3 - Jesus as "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief"
- Hebrews 2:9-11 - Jesus made perfect through suffering
- Romans 5:3-5 - Suffering produces endurance, character, and hope
- James 1:2-4 - Count it joy when you face trials
- 2 Corinthians 4:17 - Light momentary affliction preparing eternal glory

SERMON SUMMARY

This week's sermon examined suffering through the lens of Christian faith. Beginning with Jesus' own life of suffering "under Pontius Pilate," the message explored how suffering serves a redemptive purpose in the believer's life. Just as Jesus' suffering led to perfection and opened the path to salvation, our suffering teaches us obedience, develops our character, and prepares us for glory. Rather than merely praying for God to remove our suffering, we are encouraged to ask Him to accomplish His will through our trials.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (40-45 minutes)

Understanding the Biblical View of Suffering (15 minutes)

1. **Jesus as our model:** The sermon points out that there's nothing in the Apostles' Creed between Jesus' birth and His suffering. Why do you think suffering is given such prominence in the Christian story?
2. **The apostles' examples:** The sermon mentions how all the apostles suffered for following Jesus. How does knowing about their suffering impact your understanding of what it means to follow Christ today?
3. **Biblical expectations:** Read Philippians 1:29 together: "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake." How does this verse challenge the popular notion that becoming a Christian will make life easier?

Personal Reflection on Suffering (15 minutes)

4. **Types of suffering:** The sermon lists many forms suffering can take (physical, relational, emotional, etc.). Which form have you experienced most in your life? How has God worked through that specific type of suffering?
5. **Learning obedience:** Hebrews 5:8-9 teaches that Jesus learned obedience through suffering. Share about a time when suffering taught you to trust and obey God in a deeper way.
6. **Character development:** Romans 5:3-5 describes how suffering produces endurance, character, and hope. Which of these qualities have you seen develop in your own life through difficult times?

Applying Biblical Truth About Suffering (15 minutes)

7. **Shifting our prayers:** The closing prayer in the sermon asks God not just to remove suffering but to "accomplish his will in the suffering." How might this perspective change the way you pray when facing difficulties?
8. **Community support:** The sermon ends with an invitation for people to share their burdens with others for prayer. What prevents Christians from being vulnerable about their suffering? How can our group create a safe space for sharing our struggles?
9. **Eternal perspective:** According to 2 Corinthians 4:17, our "light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory." How can we maintain this eternal perspective during intense suffering?

APPLICATION (10 minutes)

- Ask each person to share one insight from today's discussion that they want to apply this week
- Consider ways the group can support members who are currently going through suffering
- Commit to praying differently about current struggles, asking God to accomplish His will through them rather than simply removing them

PRAYER (10 minutes)

- Share specific prayer requests, especially related to current struggles
- Pray for one another, asking God to use suffering to develop character and deepen faith
- Close by reciting together 1 Peter 5:10: "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Journal this week about a current struggle, focusing on what God might be teaching you through it rather than just asking for it to be removed
- Read through the book of Job, noting how his suffering ultimately drew him closer to God
- Memorize Romans 8:18: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."