

Y

YOUR PAIN & SUFFERING

A Touch of the Refiner's Fire

Study #25

Joseph Bayly and his wife lost three of their children – one at eighteen days (after surgery); another at five years (leukemia); a third at eighteen years (sledding accident plus hemophilia). Each time the wave of grief pounded their shore – tears flowed.

Tears are a universal language. One need not understand words to comprehend their meaning. They communicate far more deeply than verbalization ever could.

And it is a language that everyone speaks, sometime, somewhere. The pain of illness, disease, war, rejection, desertion, financial reversal, death, and more, leaves a person suffering, stunned, and questioning “Why, Why me? Why now? Why this?” It leaves them drowning in a sea of perplexity.



More than the previous twenty-four lessons, this topic strikes at the core of our emotions, at the center of our heart. Pain arrests our attention. It brings us to a halt and forces us to reevaluate, to reconsider, and often to revise our priorities. We don't need stale answers and pious platitudes; we

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Checklist

- This Lesson
 - Spiritual Journal
 - Gospel Tracts
- For Next Session**
- Lesson Z

Informal Conversation –

Ask about his week.
Ask about answers to the prayer requests you have shared.

Discuss Last Week's Assignments –

1. Ask him to share his Scriptural insights, prayers, and applications from his Spiritual Journal.
2. Share one of your Quiet Times.
3. Exchange highlights of your sermon notes.
4. Ask him about his effort of handing out a gospel tract.

Read this page together.

need God. This lesson just skims the surface; it gives us a *little* Biblical perspective. All believers will pass through various trials. Some trials come from Satan, some from other people, some from our own doing, some from life in general, and some from the Lord. Regardless of the origin, God can and does use suffering to accomplish His will in us.

I. MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT SUFFERING



A. *When you become a Christian, your problems are over.*

This sounds good, but it simply isn't true. In their attempt to speak about the wonderful Christian life, believers may exaggerate beyond the truth. All Bible characters (even Christ) suffered.

B. *Your trials are a result of personal sin.*

“You are unspiritual, and God is punishing you.” This can be true, but it is not always the case. Read John 9:2-3 about a man who innocently suffered the pain of blindness.

C. *Trials are bad.*

No, the opposite is true. Trials are good and have many benefits, as this lesson will address.

Comment:

You have probably already experienced your share of problems as a Christian. God didn't promise to eliminate problems; He promised to sustain us **in** the problems.

Don't automatically assume that the trial is a punishment from God.

II. WHY SUFFERING IS PART OF GOD'S PLAN

A. *Suffering is a certainty.*

1. In John 16:33, Jesus predicted that we would have T_____.

2. In 2 Timothy 3:12, what did Paul say that all godly Christians will suffer?
P _____.
3. In 1 Peter 4:12, Peter said it is not a strange thing to face a F _____ T _____.

B. *All adversity that believers face is under God's sovereign control and contained within His sovereign plan.*

Knowing that God is sovereign in all things does not mean that we will have comprehensive understanding, but it does give us hope in the midst of difficult times. In Isaiah 55:9, God says His W_____ and T_____ are higher than ours. Though His sovereignty is all-powerful, it isn't always predictable. He can do as He chooses in any situation, with anyone, at any time – and it will always be right!

"Pain plants a flag of reality in the fortress of a rebel heart."

1. According to Romans 8:28, God causes "A___ things [to] work together for G_____."
2. Who does He do this for? _____

This is not a "fatalist" approach to life. It is living by *faith* as God instructed us to. Suffering is part of His plan. There are benefits of suffering. What are they?

Share a painful experience from your life (trial, suffering, persecution) with your Timothy. Tell him the lessons you learned from it and how God used it to help you grow.

Illustration:
Taken individually, the ingredients in a cake may not taste very good. Raw flour is not good! Baking powder, raw eggs, bitter chocolate, or shortening are not good. Any one of these by itself does not taste good, but they work together to make a delicious cake. In a similar way, God puts together the experiences of our life, trials, joys, blessings, etc. to produce a good life.

III. BENEFITS OF SUFFERING

Suffering tests the validity of what we believe and reveals to us the genuineness of our profession of faith. Read Jesus’ parable of the Sower and the Soils in Matthew 13:1-9 and its interpretation in verses 18-23. Fill in the chart below.

Kind of Soil	What Happened to the Soil	Type of Person the Soil Represented	What Happens to the Person

Illustration:
 A sure way to test the genuineness of a diamond is by means of what jewelers call the water test. Placing the real and the imitation side by side in water reveals the difference. Real diamonds continue to sparkle brilliantly underwater, whereas fake ones practically lose all their sparkle. Similarly, trials reveal authenticity of faith.

What causes the “stony soil person” to fall away (verses 20-21)? T _____ and P _____

A. *Suffering reveals the strength of our faith.*

Pause to read Genesis 22:1-14.

1. According to Genesis 22:12, Abraham’s willingness to offer Isaac revealed that Abraham F_____ God.
2. According to Hebrews 11:17-19, Abraham was willing to offer Isaac because he believed God was able to do what? “R_____ him up, even from the D_____ ...”

Ask Rhetorically:
 How strong is your faith? Can you imagine being Abraham? Could we have taken such a bold step of faith as he did?

Abraham believed God even though he had never known a resurrection. This extraordinary faith in the presence of a severe test shows us that a believer can face difficult trials if he wholeheartedly trusts God. Trials are faith revealing!

3. In 2 Chronicles 32:31, God tested Hezekiah that “*he might know A___ that was in his H_____.*” Since God is omniscient He doesn’t need to test us to find out what is in our heart. Rather, He tests us so that *we* will know what is in our own hearts. In this way God assists us in taking a spiritual inventory.

B. *Suffering reveals what we really love.*

1. “*Though he slay me, yet will I T_____ in him*” (Job 13:15).
2. Abraham’s trial revealed that he loved God more than Isaac.

C. *Suffering teaches us humility and patience, and develops a dependence upon God.*

1. According to 2 Corinthians 12:7, why did God send a trial to the Apostle Paul?
“*There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be E_____ above measure.*”

Paul had received an abundance of revelations from God and could have started thinking highly of himself. But to preserve Paul’s humility, God allowed Satan to strike him with a chronic problem. In this way Paul realized that there was no strength in himself. He was dependent upon the grace of God.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

Emphasize Paul’s experience of praying for the removal of the suffering. God answered with a “No.” The suffering was necessary, though not comfortable.

2. In 1 Peter 2:20, what does God say is acceptable? _____

"Face your deficiencies and acknowledge them, but do not let them master you. Let them teach you patience, sweetness, insight."

Helen Keller

3. Trials and sufferings develop in us enduring strength for greater usefulness. According to James 1:2-4, the testing of our faith produces P _____.

"While all things are quiet and comfortable, we live by sense rather than faith. But the worth of a soldier is never known in times of peace."

Puritan Thomas Manton

The Christian life is constant spiritual conflict. It exercises the believer, and his spiritual muscles become stronger and more useful. This process builds his spiritual endurance and makes him more useful for future ministry.

4. According to Psalm 77:1-2, what did the Psalmist do in his day of trouble?
- "I C _____ unto God with my voice...."
 - "I S _____ the Lord...."

Illustration:

Galusha Pennypacker of Schwenksville, PA entered the Federal Army as a private. After basic training, it was said that the least likely man to fight was "the young Pennypacker." But in battles throughout the war, his heroic deeds earned him the rank of Brigadier General. The worth of the man was manifested in the crucible of conflict.

Don't make the mistake of getting mad at God. He is helping not hurting you. Run to Him, depend upon Him.

Comment:
Immature Christians get angry with God. They think God should bend to their will instead of them bending to His. They focus on the immediate and fail to see the eternal.

D. *Suffering enables us to help others in their pain.*

1. According to 2 Corinthians 1:4, what does God do for us when we are faced with tribulations? _____
2. According to verse 4, why does He do this? _____

Suffering deepens our fellowship with God and spiritually enriches us. This benefits others experiencing similar trials.

3. Through Christ's own testing and sufferings He is "*touched with the F _____ of our I _____*" (Hebrews 4:15). We are more able to empathize with sufferers when we have suffered ourselves.
4. Jesus warned Simon Peter that Satan would try him. Upon recovery from the trial, what was Peter to do? (Luke 22:30-32)

Comment:
The Christian life is an "others-oriented" way of life. We are here by God's design for the sake of others and not just for our own enjoyment in living.

E. *Suffering causes us to focus on eternity and the intangible values of this life.*

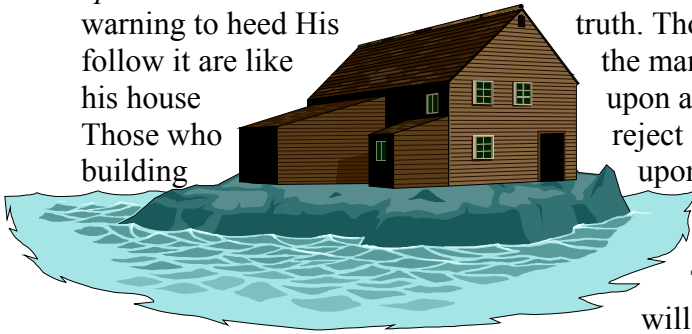
1. Trials make us long for heaven; we focus on eternal things rather than the passing things of this earth. Read Romans 8:18-24a.
2. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.
 - a. What perishes? _____
 - b. What is renewed? _____
 - c. How long does our light affliction last? A M _____

Paul's Analogy

In 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 Paul speaks of our bodies as *being* “our earthly house” and “this tabernacle.” Though our body may die, we have a house in heaven – a heavenly body, eternal, and made by God. We should look forward to receiving this glorified body and earnestly desire it. This present earthly body has burdens, it groans, it’s mortal. One day we will leave this flesh and be clothed in our new, glorified body. According to 2 Corinthians 5:8, when we leave this present body we will be “P _____ with the L _____.”

IV. DEALING WITH SUFFERING

It is not a question of *if* but *when* suffering will come. Job 5:7 says, “Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” Jesus closed His Sermon on the Mount with the warning to heed His truth. Those who follow it are like the man who built his house upon a rock. Those who reject it are building upon sand. The rains will descend. The floods will come.



Some will stand and others will fall. The trials are coming; be ready! How?

The key to preparedness in the Christian life is *being* – being what? Being a godly disciple; that is, daily living the truth of God’s Word (as a dedicated, consecrated, committed, victorious Christian). Live separated from sin. Be filled with the Spirit. Submit your will to God. Serve Him faithfully. Then when trials come, you will be

Read this introduction to Dealing With Suffering.

Comment: Walking with the Lord is the best preparation for suffering.

spiritually mature enough to handle them. You will view the suffering not as a spanking but as a stretching of your faith. So, when being *STRETCHED*...

A. Know that God is compassionately aware of it.

According to Matthew 10:29, not even a S _____ falls to



the ground without the Father. God knows all about you, even to the numbering of the hairs of your head!

B. Respond to God with grateful prayer.

(Philippians 4:6) “Be C _____ for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

1. Thankfulness for the trial is a strong antidote to worry and anxiety.
2. According to verse 7 what is the result of such gratitude of heart? *The P _____ of God.*
Philippians 4:6-7 teaches us that God is primarily concerned about our heart attitude, not providing instant answers to our whims.

Comment:

Suffering is going to come. Thank God for it and look for the lessons He is teaching you. Use this as an opportunity to testify of the goodness of God. You will probably come into contact with unsaved people – witness to them.

C. Be confident of God providence over your life.

1. Paul said he learned, “in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be C _____” (Philippians 4:11).
2. Joseph saw God in the trials of his life. Regarding being sold into slavery, he told his brothers, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto G _____, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20).

3. In John 9:2 the disciples asked Jesus, “*Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*” What reason did Jesus give for this man’s blindness? _____

God had a purpose for this man. From birth to adulthood he was blind, and this blindness was part of God’s providential plan. A trial is BIGGER than our personal comfort. God is at work in us!

D. Do not be surprised by suffering.

1. What did Peter say we are not to “*think it strange*” (be surprised at) in 1 Peter 4:12? “*The F_____ T_____ which is to try you.*”
2. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 Paul says trials (temptations) are “*C_____ to man.*”

E. R_____ in suffering (1 Peter 4:13).

This doesn’t mean we revel in the pain or in the difficulty itself, but in the results of the trial. In suffering we can identify with Christ. And when He comes again we will exceedingly rejoice at the deliverance. Imagine suffering the pain of an incurable disease, and in the midst of it Jesus returns! The pain is gone! What a day that would be!

F. Trust God in suffering.

(1 Peter 4:19) “*Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God C_____ the K_____ of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*”

1. The word “commit” is a banking term meaning to *deposit for safekeeping*. Peter is exhorting us as sufferers to give ourselves over to the care of God.
2. What did Jesus pray in Gethsemane in Luke 22:42? “...not _____.”

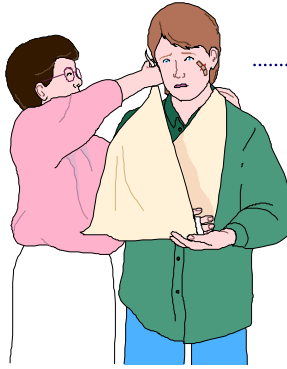
G. Wait on the Lord.

(Psalms 27:14) “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall S_____ thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”

(Isaiah 40:31) “But they that wait upon the LORD shall R_____ their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

V. HOW TO HELP HURTING PEOPLE

(Ecclesiastes 4:9-10) “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. {10} For if they fall, the one will L_____ up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to H_____ him up.”



Comment:

Get involved! Get involved in the life of someone who is suffering. They need you! Perhaps your entire family could do something to help them. There will be a residual benefit of joy for you.

Be available to them. Bear one another’s burdens. Pray for those who hurt. Write a letter and give a hug. Keep the platitudes to yourself. Remember, when a person is down in the world, an ounce of help is better than a pound of preaching.

"In order to console, there is no need to say much. It is enough to listen, to understand, to love."

Paul Tournier

Joe Bayly, the man mentioned at the beginning of this lesson, wrote the following:

I was sitting, torn by grief. Someone came and talked to me of God's dealings of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly, he said things I knew were true. I was unmoved except to wish he'd go away. He finally did. Another came and sat beside me. He just sat beside me for an hour and more, listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, left. I was moved. I was comforted, I hated to see him go.

What you are to the sufferer is often more important than what you say. And how you sit and listen and are part of his life is often far more important than the words you speak.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH ASSIGNMENT

- ❑ Complete your Z Lesson (**Zion**).
- ❑ Continue reading through the New Testament.
- ❑ Take sermon notes using your *Spiritual Journal*.
- ❑ Give out copies *The Amazing Story Behind Amazing Grace*.
- ❑ Where would you like to meet for next week's session?
- ❑ Be sure to bring your Bible, pen, Z Lesson, and *Spiritual Journal*.

Encourage your Timothy and cast a vision for him regarding spiritual growth.

Pray for him and have him pray aloud.

REMEMBER!!!
Turn in the "Discipler Report Back" page by dropping it off at the Hospitality Booth in the church foyer.

Discipler Report Back



I met with _____ on
_____/_____/_____ and reviewed the contents of this
lesson. My comments regarding the discipleship time
together are:

*(make comments only if they are needed to help the Pastoral
staff assist you in ministering to this person)*

Discipler's Name _____

*Please drop this off at the Hospitality Booth in the
church foyer on the first service after conducting
this session. This will help the Pastoral staff stay
current with the status of our new converts and
new members being disciplined.*

Thank You

**This is a
sample of
the
“Discipler
Report
Back” page
that you
removed
from the
back of your
Timothy’s
lesson.**

**Return that
sheet to the
Hospitality
Booth in the
church foyer.**