

# 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.

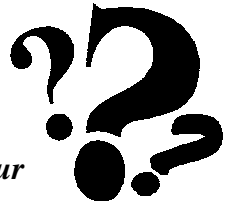


More than the previous twenty-four lessons, this topic strikes at the core of our emotions, at the center of our heart. Pain arrests our attention. It brings us to a halt and forces us to reevaluate, to reconsider, and often to revise our priorities. We don't need stale answers and pious platitudes;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

<p><b>Lesson Overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Misunderstandings About Suffering</li> <li>II. Why Suffering is Part of God's Plan</li> <li>III. Benefits of Suffering</li> <li>IV. Dealing with Suffering</li> <li>V. How to Help Hurting People</li> </ul>
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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.

## 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?

**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

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\_\_\_\_\_ ...”

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.

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...*”

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

**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)  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

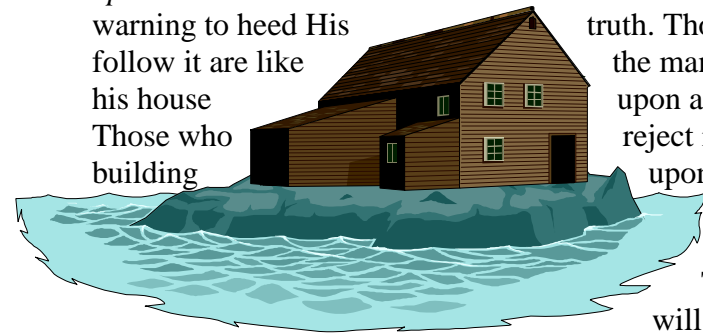
1. Trials make us long for heaven; we focus on eternal things rather than the passing things of this earth. Read Romans 8:18-24a.
2. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.
  - a. What perishes? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What is renewed? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. How long does our light affliction last? A M \_\_\_\_\_

**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

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 *S T R E T C H E D*...

**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.

**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.”*



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*.

# Discipler Report Back



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

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*(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*