

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends
Hope's Journey: The Way of Suffering, 12/1/2019

The Big Idea

While God does not desire our sufferings, our present and earthly pain is a reminder that Christ shares his glory with his children in eternity. For Jesus, there was no resurrection without betrayal, trial, and execution. And for us, hope comes precisely by way of suffering. In their own pain-avoidance privileged people don't like to come to terms with their suffering. They would prefer to pretend it's not there by distracting or medicating themselves from it. But hope's journey travels through the pain...by way of the cross. This is the hope that doesn't disappoint.

Where we are in the Bible

Romans 5:1-5. While it may seem small, the "therefore" in Romans 5.1 is quite significant. What follows is not only a progression in subject matter in Paul's letter to the Romans, but also some stylistic changes –so much so that some have speculated that an apprentice wrote it and penned Paul's name; or perhaps chapters 5-8 were written later and then combined. Either way, the theme of justification by faith moves to the results that God offers. Indeed, what happens to people when they believe and follow Jesus?

Finding a bit of ourselves

- For many people the holidays are a time of grieving. Are the holidays a bitter-sweet experience for you?
- Pain and suffering has a tendency to bring out some root thoughts and beliefs we hold, thoughts like "God is punishing me" or "I'm being taught a lesson." What are some root thoughts/beliefs that surface in the midst of your hardships?
- Think about the early church that Paul is writing to and imagine yourself as one of them. What kinds of thoughts and fears would you wrestle with in the face of persecution?

Where do we go from here?

- Sometimes people advocate to "fake it till you make it" while navigating life's trials. What kind of damage can this approach lead to?
- Coming to terms with our trials can be scary. Has there been a time when you were tempted to distract or medicate yourself from the pain of suffering?
- In the message, three types of prayers are given as tools to help us come to terms with our suffering: Lament, Imprecatory, and Confession. Which prayer do you find yourself praying more?

Prayer focus

Write your own prayers in the three forms discussed in the message:

Lament – "Lord, I hurt..."

Imprecatory – "Lord, I hate..."

Confession – "Lord, I've harmed..."

Ask for God's healing touch in these areas, and thank Him in advance for his mercy that washes over you.

If you have time, pray the same healing prayer over others you know that are suffering.

Other scriptures to consider

Matthew 5:10-12
Blessed are those...

Psalms 119:114-117
A prayer in the Psalms

Isaiah 53:4-12
A prophecy of Jesus

John 16:33
We will face trouble

