



small groups

Discussion Guide



BE Faithful In Suffering

1 Peter 4:12-19

Ice Breaker

(5 minutes)

Andy titled his sermon "God's Megaphone." Before you get to the heavy stuff, break the ice with some megaphone talk. The only people who use megaphones is cheerleaders, so answer this question: Can you recite the words to your high school fight song?

Consider having a contest to see who can sing their fight song the best.

Lesson Review

(40 minutes)

Suffering is an important part of our growth. Andy said that we will never get our "Master of Discipleship degree" without taking a class in suffering. C.S. Lewis agreed:

"Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

—C.S. Lewis

Our Suffering Theology

Andy shared two truths about suffering in the Christian life: it's inevitable and purposeful.

Suffering Is Inevitable

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19

Andy spoke to the common misconception that it's God's job to rescue his children from hardship. He called it "balderdash."

Discuss

- Have you heard this teaching before, or encountered it as an assumption that people make?
- Why do you think some Christians believe that? What verses do they use to support that idea?

Suffering Is Purposeful

Read Romans 5:3-5

"God's providence means that ... nothing is wasted in a believer's life. Even the things that seem to be setbacks, roadblocks, and defeats – even those things are not wasted by God. He never allows anything to happen in our life by chance. Everything – even those things that seem like mistakes – has a divinely ordered purpose."

– Ray Pritchard

Discuss

- Going back to the "balderdash" above, God certainly has the power to save all his people from hardship. Why doesn't he? What is the purpose of suffering for Christians?

Our Suffering Assignment

Andy said we have a two-part assignment in our suffering: to let Christ live through us, and to let hope shine through us.

Let Christ Live Through You

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7

Andy said, "God doesn't care about producing the circumstances I want; he cares about producing the me he wants through circumstances." He used the example of IBCers Troy and Bonnie Kelley. Troy is in hospice care and expects to die in the next few weeks, yet all he wanted to talk to Andy about was how joyful and grateful he is.

Let Hope Shine Through You

This part of the assignment is to remind the world of simple truths: Heaven is real. Jesus loves us. And death is just a crossing over. Andy said this is "where the rubber meets the road" of faith because it's how we prove that we really believe. Andy said he believes that part of the reason God allowed his journey into the valley of suffering is so that he could come back and report, "It's really true!"

Read Romans 8:18-28

Andy used another IBCer as an example of hope in suffering. Jay Hohfeler struggled through a long and painful ordeal with cancer and the effects of aggressive treatment. His wife Beth wrote in a CaringBridge update:

We have battled hopelessness, but we have seen God's hand in our lives most especially in recent weeks. . . Frankly, we are sometimes weary, discouraged and living with great uncertainty. . . there is greater and unlimited truth in God's character of love and provision for us. We continue to see, daily, demonstrations of His love, care and faithfulness to us. And so we are encouraged, as Paul said, to "walk by faith, not by sight."

Application

(15 minutes)

Discuss

- People like Jay, Troy and Andy who can remain hopeful and faithful in great suffering are inspiring. But God can work in less painful sufferings too. What's your greatest pain right now? You may not be fighting cancer or grieving a loved one, but you have some burden to bear. Share it with your group. Then pray for one another.
- Andy's message was about what to do in our own suffering, but we also have an opportunity to represent Jesus in other people's suffering. Who do you know who is suffering? How can you care for them this week?
- Pray for Pastor Andy whose mother died Friday. Pray for comfort for his family and strength for Andy to deal with his loss and still plan and speak at the memorial service.