

## I Peter – What's the Story We Tell of Our Suffering?

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I Peter 4:1-19

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### **Reflection & Discussion Questions**

#### **The story we tell ourselves becomes the story we live out**

Painful experiences and our perceptions of them become the truths we believe and live by.

\*What is the story you've sometimes told yourself about your suffering?

#### **We must look at suffering through a spiritual lens and not a logical one**

Nothing hinders our ability to experience wholeness like broken thoughts run rampant.

Read and discuss I Peter 4:1-6(ESV)

*4 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, <sup>2</sup> so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. <sup>3</sup> For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. <sup>4</sup> With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; <sup>5</sup> but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup> For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.*

\*What do these verses say about God? About people?

\*Why is it so imperative that we let him into the narrative we've written in our minds about suffering?

\*What is the difference between understanding and finding meaning in suffering?

\*How does worldly culture try to give us answers about suffering?

#### **Suffering can cultivate a full-strength love**

Suffering can be a catalyst for love in a way nothing else can.

Read and discuss I Peter 4:7-11(ESV)

*<sup>7</sup> The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. <sup>8</sup> Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: <sup>11</sup> whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

\*How does prayer help us process suffering?

\*In what spiritual sense can suffering be a gift? How is that hard to hear?

\*How has your pain or heartbreak formed deep communion with God or with someone else?

#### **Suffering people can love and trust a suffering God**

He is going to see us through.

Read and discuss I Peter 4:12-19(ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup> But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup> If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. <sup>15</sup> But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. <sup>16</sup> Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. <sup>17</sup> For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> And

“If the righteous is scarcely saved,  
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

<sup>19</sup> Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

\*What do these verses say about God? About people?

\*Why do we sometimes seem to want to hold on to our pain so tightly?

\*What could it mean to allow him to redeem our suffering? Do you sense the Spirit wanting to reframe some of the stories you've embraced?

**Join us as we read through the book of I Peter this winter as a church**

**January 7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>:** I Peter 3:1 – 4:19

**Visual reflection (Visio Divina)\*** [The Heavens Wept With Me](#) by Caitlin Connolly

**Song for reflection** [The Story I'll Tell](#) by Maverick City Music

\*Visio divina – a thoughtful and slow way of contemplating a visual prompt like a piece of art, photograph or image and inviting God to speak to you through it. First, focus on the detail that your eyes are drawn to right away – keep focus there and pay attention to what thoughts and emotions you are having. Then, look at the entire image and consider it as a whole, being aware of thoughts, questions and emotions it provokes. End in silence and prayer, considering your experience and anything you feel called to respond to.