

Chosen Aliens: Be Ready to Suffer

What's the Big Idea?

God's people should be ready to suffer for righteousness' sake.

What's the Problem?

Suffering comes upon us, and we're not prepared for it. So we don't respond the way God wants us to.

What's our Response?

We should draw upon God's power to live a life of sobriety, love, and service in the face of suffering.

Memorize

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

1 Peter 4:1

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

This passage is the second of three sections spanning to from 1 Peter 3:13-4:19 that provides a Christian perspective on suffering. In this section Peter wants to help prepare his readers to suffer well for righteousness' sake. Peter emphasizes a life of sobriety, love, and service as preparation for the suffering that will come our way because we bear the name of Christ.

Live for the Will of God-1 Peter 4:1-6

Peter reminds his readers in verse 1 that their lives are wrapped up in Christ. Because Christ has suffered, they should expect suffering as his followers. The benefit of suffering for Christ's sake is that we cease from sin. In other words, we cease to live for our own will and live for God's will instead. Peter tells his readers that they had enough time before they knew Jesus to live for themselves. Yet the people who give them flak for their faith in Christ, the ones who currently live the way Peter's readers used to live, will give an account to God for their choices.

Help your group to realize that they should expect suffering as God's children. Help them to see that Jesus is worthy of them embracing whatever comes their way as they choose to follow God's will instead of their own.

Be Awake, Love, and Serve-1 Peter 4:7-11

When Peter says "the end of all things is at hand," he's saying that all the "big stuff" in God's story—namely, Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension and the outpouring of his Spirit on his people—has already happened. All that remains now is for Christ's return, which could happen at any time. Therefore, God's people should be sober-minded, full of love, and ready to serve using the gifts God has provided them.

Help your group to see that even though our natural tendency in the face of suffering is to run and hide, God calls us to see suffering in light of God's bigger picture: his imminent return and the specific roles he's called us to play in hastening that return.

What Are the Questions?

Launch

When you know you're going to face a really challenging situation, how do you prepare for it?

Explore

Read 1 Peter 4:1-6

1. How would you describe the suffering that Christ suffered (verse 1; 3:18)?
2. What do you think Peter means when he says to “arm yourselves with the same purpose” (verse 1)?
3. What reason does Peter give for being ready to suffer for righteousness’ sake in verse 1?
4. In what way does suffering for righteousness’ sake cause someone to cease from sin (verse 1)?
5. What do you think Peter is trying to say in verses 3-6?

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11

6. Since most of the major events in God’s story have already happened (e.g.: creation, fall, Christ’s death and resurrection), what do you think Peter means when he says “the end of all things is here” (verse 7)?
7. In what way is being of sound judgment and sober spirit an appropriate response for the end of all things being near?
8. How do you think being of sound judgment and sober spirit contributes to effective prayer (verse 7)?
9. What do you think Peter means when he says that love covers a multitude of sins (verse 8)?
10. What do you think it means to be hospitable to one another without complaint (verse 9)?
11. How does verse 22 contribute to God’s people suffering well for righteousness’ sake?
12. What motivations does Peter give for using your gifts for God (verses 10-11)?

Apply

13. In what ways do you struggle in living for the will of God instead of for the “desire of the Gentiles”?
14. How does Christ’s suffering on your behalf and the prospect of his judgment motivate you to live for his will instead of your own?
15. What steps can you take to live for God’s will instead of for your own?
16. What steps can you take in God’s power to be of sound judgment and sober spirit?
17. Who do you most need to love fervently?
18. One definition of hospitality is making room for people at the table of your life. Who do you need to make room for at the table of your life, and how can you do that?
19. What steps do you need to take to use the gifts God has given you?

What Are the Answers?

1. Christ suffered physically, but he also suffered spiritually by bearing our sins on his shoulders.
2. We should draw on God’s power so that we can follow Christ’s example in being ready to suffer.
3. Christ’s followers who have suffered have “ceased from sin.”
4. “Ceasing from sin” in this context means that a person has stopped living for their own will and is now living for God’s will, which in this case includes suffering.
5. God’s people had enough time to live for themselves when they didn’t know Jesus. Although those who give them flak for their faith still live for themselves, they will have to face God’s judgment.
6. Since all the other major events in God’s story have already happened, the last major event (Christ’s return) could happen at any time.
7. Having sound judgment and sober spirit empowers a person to be focused on what’s really important in the face of the challenging circumstances that will come with the days that precede Christ’s return (see Matthew 24 and 2 Timothy 3).
8. When someone experiences love from another, he or she tends to look past other offenses more easily.
9. Christ is the supreme example of suffering for doing what’s right.
10. It means to make room in your life to show practical kindness to people without griping about it.
11. Just as the waters carried Noah and his family to safety in the ark, baptism (i.e.: faith in Christ) carries us to eternal safety.
12. We should use our gifts for God as a matter of stewarding what God has entrusted to us so that he may be glorified.
13. It reminds us that Jesus reigns over everything, even the suffering that he allows into our lives.
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. Allow the group to discuss.
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