



SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Speaker: Chris Royalty // Sunday: July 30, 2023

- 1) Begin your time by briefly praying and asking the Holy Spirit to help you as you discuss and study.
- 2) Read John 21:1-19 together.
- 3) What stuck out to you as you read? Is there anything you don't understand? Is there anything you'd like to discuss?
- 4) Describe a time in your life when you felt like everything was going wrong. How do these times reveal the object of your trust?
- 5) What is Jesus showing the disciples by allowing them to fail at fishing?
- 6) Why is it good news for Christians that our comfort is the mercy of Christ rather than our morality?
- 7) How has following Jesus changed your priorities?
- 8) How has experiencing the mercy of Christ prepared you for proclaiming it? What specific examples from your own life display Christ's mercy?

Common Myths About Suffering

Myth 1: For a Mature Believer, Suffering Is Easy

As an old man Peter would be carried where he didn't want to go (v. 18). Writing to suffering Christians, Peter cautioned them not to be surprised at their "fiery ordeal" (1 Pet 4:12). If suffering were easy or light, would Peter have described it with those words? Only pseudo-spirituality pretends suffering is easy. The gospel doesn't minimize suffering; it helps us see its ultimate purpose and gives us strength to endure.

Myth 2: The Amount We Suffer Is Based on Our Behavior

When Peter heard about his own suffering, his first response was, “What about [John]?” (v. 21). That’s what we often do when suffering comes. We look at those who don’t appear to be suffering and ask, “What about them?” We do that because we look at suffering through the lens of legalism: “Because of my sin, I have to suffer some, but I shouldn’t have to go through more than that guy. Look at his sin.” We often act as if we only receive the suffering we deserve and that we really don’t deserve for it to last long. “So take it away, Lord, and give it to someone else.” We say suffering isn’t fair, but when we think clearly, we don’t want fair. Fair is eternal suffering in hell. God may have you suffer greatly but give little suffering to a brother or sister. The difference doesn’t depend on you; it depends of God’s gracious, sovereign plan.

Myth 3: God Isn’t in Control of Suffering

Of all the myths about suffering, this one is most prevalent and most dangerous. The logic goes like this: suffering is the result of sin. God doesn’t sin. Therefore, suffering is outside of God’s control. That logic will not hold up under the scrutiny of Scripture. Even here it fails. What would happen to John was determined by what Jesus’s will for John was (v. 22). So that means what would happen to Peter—suffering and death—was determined by Jesus’s will for Peter. God has a purpose for your suffering. Your suffering is not meaningless. It is not random. It is God’s will for you. We may not understand the full scope of his purposes in sending suffering, but we should never doubt that he does have a purpose. Listen to an older and wiser Peter as he instructs the sheep:

Dear friends, don’t be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed....

So then, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good. (1 Pet 4:12–13, 19)

- 9) Why is it good news that God is in control over suffering in your life?
- 10) How has the cross made it possible for Christians to endure suffering?
- 11) End your time in prayer. Ask God to help you apply the things you’ve discussed and learned during this time of study.¹

¹ Some of these questions and the commentary about suffering taken from: Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg, [*Exalting Jesus in John*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 393-395.