Session #5: Reflecting – The Suffering of Christ
This session has a chance to create a different mood for your group as you discuss how Jesus’ suffering is model for us to follow. It can be a heavy topic and isn’t really a joyful concept. Pray for your group to be able to handle the depth and emotion of this study and share openly about their hopes and fears when it comes to suffering for Christ. Remember, most of us never suffer significantly for the cross but we are still called to love and support those who do. You might want to go to the website, www.persecuted.com (Voice of the Martyrs) to learn of present day Christians suffering for the gospel as you prepare for your groups session.

As we continue our study of I Peter we’re engaging with the question: **How can the character of Jesus be reflected in my life so others see him?**

This fifth session focuses on **Reflecting: The Suffering of Christ**. We know that Jesus walked in our world and experienced all the ups and downs we do. He knew what it was like to be tired, hungry, and even betrayed. Jesus’ suffering culminated at the cross but was present throughout his life on earth. When Jesus is in mortal anguish on the cross he reveals that even in suffering you can bless others with his request to God, “Forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” Jesus suffers so we don’t have to in eternity but he doesn’t promise a life free of suffering in this broken world.

Here are a few key thoughts you’ll be discussing as a group this session:
- Why do Christians think that they should be exempt from suffering?
- How do you respond to suffering in your life?
- How has the heroic suffering of others inspired you to be strong in seasons of pain and persecution?

What can you do to get ready for this weeks study?
- Pray. Pray for the members of your group. Pray for yourself. Pray for North Terrace.
- Prepare. Take time to review the video, curriculum, and other materials before the meeting. This should take 1-2 hours each week.
- Communicate. With your group members ahead of each meeting and at least once during the week. With NT Groups leaders so we can support you.

This week’s gathering flow looks like this:
- Pre-Meeting
- Eating Together
- Starting Together
- Learning Together
- Sharing Together
- Praying Together
- Post-Meeting
Week #5: Reflecting: The Suffering of Christ

Pre-Meeting
- Materials List:
  - Pens/Pencils
  - Scrap Paper (Dangerous Jobs Activity List)
  - Copies of “Week #5– Suffering” Discussion Notes
  - Copies of “Reflecting Jesus– Week #5”
  - Name Tags
  - Snack
  - Prayer List
- Preparation
  - Review Video Teaching
  - Review Discussion Questions
  - Pray

Eating Together (10 minutes)
- As people begin to arrive for this meeting:
  - Greet them at the door and welcome them in.
  - Have everyone wear a nametag.
- Opening Activity: “Nametag Notes”
  - As people write their names have them also write what there most painful injury has been.
  - Have some fun comparing answers and getting to know each other.
- Snack
  - Have a snack and drink(s) available for everyone to share.
Starting Together (10-15 minutes)
• Gather everyone together and remind them of three simple expectations for the group:
  o What we talk about in this group, stays in this group.
  o Be here. Make it a priority to participate and attend.
  o Have an open mind and open heart to God.
• Opening Discussion: “Anything But That”
  o Open a discussion time by asking, “Have you heard of a bucket list. You know, the things we hope we do before we die (Kick the Bucket). Most people have a reverse bucket list, things we hope we never do before we die.”
  o Ask, “What is one thing you hope you never have to do?”
• Opening Activity: “Favorite Foods/Grossest Foods”
  o Divide into 2 teams. Give each team three minutes to come up with their top 5 favorite foods and bottom 5 grossest foods.
  o Use the teams answers to stimulate discussion about why we enjoy some things and suffer through others.
• Prayer
  o Pray for your group and your time together.

Learning Together (20 minutes)
• Video Introduction:
  o Say, “Each session we’ll watch some teaching on video and then discuss what the Bible says about that week’s concept. This week we’re looking at Jesus’ suffering and what we can learn about enduring hard times like he did.”
• Video Teaching:
  o Hand out “Week #5 – Suffering” Discussion Notes
    ▪ Encourage everyone to make notes and answer questions as you go along.
  o Play video.

Sharing Together (20–30 minutes)
• Discussion Questions:
  o Lead a discussion through “Week #3 – Citizenship”
    ▪ When have you asked God, why me?
    ▪ Is suffering a normal experience for a follower of God?
    ▪ Why do followers of Christ expect a life without suffering?
    ▪ What are your thoughts about this statement: If you choose to follow Jesus you are accepting a life that will have suffering?
    ▪ How are you responding to suffering in your life?
    ▪ How does God use suffering to tell a story of love and hope to the world?
    ▪ Have you ever suffered for Jesus? Should that concern you?
How is Jesus God’s answer to our suffering?

- Application and Challenge
  - Ask these final questions to wrap up:
    - Who has inspired you by how they endured painful events and suffering? Why are they a hero to you?
    - What did their response reveal about their belief in God?
    - Is suffering in your life resulting in growth and new hope for eternity?
  - Hand out the weekly, “Reflecting Jesus” Personal Study Sheet.
    - Encourage your group to take time this next week to do the Bible study and prayer time to go further in this study.

Praying Together (5-10 minutes)

- Introduce your closing prayer time.
- Ask for things to pray about from members of your group.
  - What can you celebrate?
  - What can you ask God for help with?
- Record the prayer requests and email them to the group for a reminder during the week. (Use the Prayer List)
- Have a volunteer pray or you wrap up the time together.

Post-Meeting

- Attendance:
  - Who came: record and pass on to chris@ntcoc.org
  - Who missed: record and follow up
- Updates to NT Groups
  - Is there anything that NT leadership needs to know?
    - Pastoral – spiritual needs
    - Physical – life needs
    - Other
- Prayer List
  - Email the prayer list to group members
- Reminders to Group
  - Updates and announcements for group to remember for next
Prayer List
Week #5: Suffering

Discussion Notes

- When have you asked God, why me?

- Is suffering a normal experience for a follower of God?

- Why do followers of Christ expect a life without suffering?

- What are your thoughts about this statement: If you choose to follow Jesus you are accepting a life that will have suffering?

- How are you responding to suffering in your life?

- How does God use suffering to tell a story of love and hope to the world?
Have you ever suffered for Jesus? Should that concern you?

How is Jesus God’s answer to our suffering?

Application

Who has inspired you by how they endured painful events and suffering? Why are they a hero to you?

What did their response reveal about their belief in God?

Is suffering in your life resulting in growth and new hope for eternity?
Reflections: Suffering – Week 5
Personal Study

Read
- Matthew 5:12, 43-48

Examine
- Matthew 5:12 occurs as part of a chain of thoughts from Jesus we call the Beatitudes. Why would Jesus tell us to rejoice in the face of persecution?
- What is a motivation given by Jesus in Matthew 5:12 for our joy during pain?
- Matthew 5:43-48 is a strong encouragement from Jesus for us to love our enemies? How can we love our enemies even when they attack us?
- If Jesus is our model for suffering with honor through persecution, what can we learn from His attitude and actions?

Apply
It goes without saying that pain is unpleasant. Persecution is the infliction of some kind of pain, whether that is physical, emotional, or spiritual. It is not a fun season of life to endure.

Followers of Jesus are called to live like he did and reflect his character. Jesus was a humble servant of God and when he was attacked for obeying God, he endured ever increasing attacks on his reputation and even his body. Ultimately, he suffered the crucifixion so we could have life everlasting.

So we don’t always suffer for our own good. Jesus suffered so that we would gain. His love was so great that he paid whatever price was necessary so that we would know of God’s great love for us. Our suffering has the potential to bring hope and life to others too.

When as the last time you suffered for the name of Jesus?

Pray
Pray for those who are being persecuted because of their faith. Ask God to you and others strength when suffering. Reflect on how a season of pain can lead to growth. Ask God to give you hope in every moment of suffering that He is with you.