

Suffering for Christ

1 Peter 4:1-19

This study looks at the same passage as the sermon outline (pp. 16-18). It can be used before or after hearing the sermon, or separately. If it is used without the sermon, it may be helpful for the group leader to read through the sermon outline beforehand. The main study is in questions 1 to 13. The section at the end entitled “Digging deeper” is intended for those who would like to explore some of the more challenging aspects of the passage, and also its context.

Introduction

1. What (if any) kinds of hostility did you suffer from other people when you became a Christian? How do you react to stories of converts to Christianity being persecuted? [You could read one of the stories from the sermon to the group.]
2. Have you ever been tempted to abandon or compromise your Christian faith or lifestyle under pressure from others? What helped you to keep going?

Read 1 Peter 4:1-6

3. What are the Christians who read this letter told to do in verses 1-3? And what reason are they given for doing so?
4. What kinds of behaviour that our society takes for granted do we need to give up when we become Christians? How do non-Christians react to our rejection of these (see v.4)?

5. How does the long view of verses 5 and 6 make a difference to our understanding of suffering for Christ? How far does it shape our response to the hostility of others?

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11

6. What does verse 7 mean by “The end of all things is near?” How does it tell us to respond, and why?
7. Why is it so important for Christians to love one another (v.8)? How might you follow the instruction in verse 9 in your own context?
8. What gifts has God given you and the other people in your group (speaking, service, others)? How can you use these to serve other Christians and glorify God (vv.10-11)?

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19

9. According to verses 12 and 13, how should we react in the face of

persecution? What incentive is offered to encourage us to do this?

10. In what way is being insulted for Christ a sign of God’s blessing (v.14)? How is it possible for us to praise God in the midst of suffering (vv.15-16)?
11. How does the teaching in verses 17 and 18 encourage us to remain faithful to Christ even when we suffer for it? How can we put verse 19 into practice?

Conclusion

12. Re-read the passage quickly and list the demands that it lays upon us as Christians and the reasons it provides for maintaining a Christian lifestyle. Identify at least one action that you will now take in response.
13. Consider how this passage might prompt you to offer prayers or practical support to Christians who are suffering for their faith.

Digging deeper

14. What do you think verse 6 might mean? (You may need to consult some books!) How might it change our outlook on suffering for Christ?
15. What else do you expect to happen at “the end of all things” (v.7)? **For some ideas, look at 1 Peter 1:3-5, 13; 5:1, 4, 10.**
16. Read some of the other verses in 1 Peter that relate to the persecution and suffering of Christians (e.g. 1:6-7; 2:12, 18-23; 3:13-17; 5:6-11). How do these add to the insights you have learned from chapter 4?