

Discussion Guide

Week of December 8, 2013

1 Peter 4:12–19

Passage Overview: As the letter draws to a close, Peter reminds his readers that they should not be astonished when they suffer. God is using the suffering to purify the church; therefore they should unreservedly give themselves to God in their sufferings. Suffering is the norm for Christians, not a surprising exception. To suffer as a Christian is a call to rejoice as a disciple of Christ, and such joy is the prelude to the joy that is to come at the return of Christ (when his glory is revealed). Believers suffer in accord with the will of God, for he rules over everything that happens to them. As the sovereign Creator, God is also loving and faithful, therefore they should entrust their lives entirely to him, just as Jesus did when he suffered (2:23). Such trust manifests itself in doing what is good.

Understanding God's Word—Read 1 Peter 4:12–19.

- What sentence or verse do you think best summarizes this text? Why?
- The Trinity—God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is prominent throughout this text. Where do you see each person of the Trinity mentioned? What do we learn about their involvement in the Christian's suffering?
- What type of suffering is Peter speaking to? What are the circumstances of godly suffering? Is there a kind of suffering that this text does not apply to?

Living and Applying God's Word

- In verse 13, Peter reveals a correlation between the Christian and Christ. Christ suffered, and his people share his suffering; therefore, when Christ comes in glory, what will be his people's experience? How can this hearten you as you walk with Christ?
- What does it mean if we are insulted for the name of Christ (v14)? Why is this important to know in times of suffering?
- "Christian" was a derogatory term in Peter's day. The term doesn't have the same connotation today, though it is increasingly associated with culturally rejected ideas. How does that add significance to his command to "glorify God *in that name*" (v16)?
- Peter refers to Christian suffering as a "fiery trial" (v12), and then as "judgment" for "the household of God" (v17). We know that salvation is by grace through faith (Eph 2:8–9), so how then does suffering fit into God's plan of salvation? Does it make a difference if this suffering is punitive *or* *cleansing*?
- Read verse 19 again. Why is it important to "entrust [your soul] to a faithful Creator" in the midst of suffering? How is this different from the suffering experienced around the world by those who don't worship the God of the Bible? Put yourself in the shoes of someone whose god isn't "a faithful Creator."

Turning to God in Faith and Repentance

- Verses 17–18 make clear the implications of judgment beginning with the people of God. If true, what does this mean for those still opposed to God? How can we have more urgency toward those who remain under his wrath? In what ways are we tempted to gloss over parts of vv17–18?
- The righteous are "scarcely saved," which is to say "saved *with difficulty*," not "saved *just barely*." If salvation is not easy and simple, how should we live today in light of this truth? How are we tempted to take our salvation for granted, and what steps can we take to remind ourselves and one another of the need to daily "entrust ourselves to a faithful Creator while doing good" (v19)?

Prayer: Learn how you can pray for one another, especially regarding any suffering or difficulties you face. Pray for encouragement and assurance of unity with Christ. Pray also for Jeff and Sara Barkhouse as they serve in Kosovo.

Announcements

- Children's Ministry Orientation (Dec. 15)—christy@insidecrosspointe.com
- Christmas Eve Service (Dec. 24, 6–7 p.m.)
- Ski Retreat (Jan. 2–5)—will@insidecrosspointe.com