

GROWTH GROUPS
WEEK 9
WEEK OF NOVEMBER 10



GROWTH GROUP FALL 2019
STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND: FINDING HOPE IN 1ST PETER
WEEK 9 – NOVEMBER 10, 2019 - 1 PETER 4:12-19

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Peter continues to show his close relationship with the people he is writing to as he calls them dear friends. He loves them deeply and does not want them to be surprised by the trials they are going to face. When Peter is writing this letter the persecution of the church is just beginning. There had been isolated incidents, but soon this persecution would be carried out in force by the leadership of the Roman Empire.

The trials the believers will face and are facing have come to test them. These trials will not be easy and believers will perhaps begin to question their faith. Sometimes believers assume that following Jesus will make things easier and that the trials and difficulties will subside. Peter makes it clear however that struggles will come. Sometimes they will be more severe than others. The key is to keep our lives rooted in Christ.

In Matthew 13 Jesus told the parable of the sower and in verses 20-21 he said, “The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.” This is what Peter is warning about.

Peter talks about rejoicing in the midst of our sufferings. In James 1:2 we are told to “consider it pure joy when we face trials of various kinds, because the testing of our faith produces perseverance.” Peter says much the same thing. It is a blessing to be counted worthy enough to suffer for the name of Christ. The world will not understand and will insult us, but we have nothing to be ashamed of. Instead of shame, we are blessed with the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon us. This should comfort us in the midst of trials.

Peter reminds us that we should continue to entrust our lives to God because God is faithful. God will take care of us even when we cannot figure out the reasons for why we are suffering. The assurance of Scripture over and over is that God will not give up on us and thus our calling is to continue to commit ourselves to God and do the good work we have been called to do.



EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19

¹² Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. ¹³ Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs. ¹⁶ But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name! ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment, and it must begin with God's household. And if judgment begins with us, what terrible fate awaits those who have never obeyed God's Good News? ¹⁸ And also, "If the righteous are barely saved, what will happen to godless sinners?" ¹⁹ So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.

- 1) Have you ever felt that you have been excluded by others because of your faith?
- 2) Why do you think God allows our faith to be tested?
- 3) Why does Peter refer to the trials as "fiery" trials? Is there some significance to this? Why not just say trials?
- 4) Why does Peter talk about "rejoicing" in suffering, rather than "enduring" through the suffering?
- 5) We know, from Matthew 16:21-28, that early on Peter didn't believe that Jesus must suffer. Why do you think he thought that? What do you think happened that changed his mind about faith and suffering?
- 6) Why does God allow suffering and how have you been able to reconcile the issue of suffering and your faith?
- 7) Verse 19 is the only time in the New Testament that God is called "the Creator." Does this idea of God as the Creator help us in any way to better deal with the suffering or struggles that come our way?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) John Calvin once wrote, "It is certain that we are guided by God's hand, and that we are in no danger of shipwreck as long as we have him as our pilot." How have you seen this to be true in your life?