

Embrace Suffering with Joy and Faithfulness

- The past 12-16 months has been like a roller coaster for me. Some of the greatest joys: the arrival of Joshua. Seeing Anna Kate and Joshua grow as siblings. Seeing students serve God both here in Carmi and in Italy.
- But there have also been more painful conversations and changes in the past 12-16 months than in the previous 12-16 years
- Relationships with those close to me have taken drastic turns I did not see coming. 10 years of slow changes
- Finances and family dynamics are changing as Melanie and I navigate...
- Two weeks ago I visited my only living grandparent and my aunt. Grandma, my dad's mom.

- Most everyone here identifies with some trial, pain or suffering
- Some of you are grieving the recent death of someone you loved dearly. Some of us are still grieving the loss of a loved one from many years ago.
- I still think of what it would be like to have my mom here to play with her grandchildren.
- Some of you are wondering how you will be able to financially support yourself, your family, a parent or someone else you care for.
- Disease or health issues are pushing some of you to the breaking point.
- Many of you are hurting over the destructive decisions a friend is making. You are worried about where someone's life is headed.
- I press these issues onto our heart and mind this morning, not to deflate the air out of the room; but so we can grapple with how we respond to the suffering in our life.
- Whether your suffering has come upon you suddenly, without warning, or it is a painful wound that is years in the healing. We all respond.
- I tend to be stoic. Other times I just want to escape.
- What about you.
- Your response is probably a mixture of both—depending on the situation, time or pressure.

- But what if there was another way? A better response? That will deal with our suffering without leading us down destructive paths.
- I am so thankful as I deal with the suffering in my life that God is not silent on suffering. And this morning, I want to look at a passage where the apostle Peter speaks into our trials.
- Turn with me to 1 Peter 4

· 1 Peter 4:12

- Let's stop for a moment at this first verse because it sets the stage for what is to come and it is a remark that might surprise us!
- Peter first remark in this section and throughout this book is not to bemoan the suffering Christians are going through. He does not try to extend sympathy. Instead, he basically says anticipate suffering.
- Suffering is going to come, so don't surprised or think it strange.
- Instead of complaining about trials, or bemoaning them or running from them – God's Word encourages us to embrace the truth that suffering will come into our life.
- We live in a fallen world. Marred by sin and among people marred by sin. Yet we act surprised by the suffering that weaves itself into our life.
- How often do we treat trials the same way. We know they are coming, but we are blindsided when they arrive – and react sinfully instead of with God's wisdom.
- Peter is not finished with us so let's keep going

· 1 Peter 4:13-16

- Peter's instruction continues to cut against the grain of regular responses to suffering.
- Don't just anticipate suffering, but embrace it with joy!
- And embrace it with joy *as you follow in Jesus footsteps!* Check out...
- **Matthew 5:10-12** "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds

of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- Have you been hurt, abandoned or disowned by a someone close to you – Jesus was betrayed by one of the twelve and disowned by one of the foremost disciples.
- Have you been misunderstood, mistreated or falsely accused – so was Jesus.
- Have you been burdened and suffered anguish because you desired more godly lives for the people around you – Jesus mourned over the sinful condition of the people he came to save.
- Have you ever prayed for suffering to pass you by (while still being obedient to God) – Jesus prayed just that as he crucifixion approached.