

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide Resurrection Among Suffering, Pain, and Weakness

2 Corinthians 4:7-18 New International Version (NIV)

⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. ¹²So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

¹³It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken."^(a) Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself.¹⁵ All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

This mini post-Luke series we're calling "Resurrection Life" is predicated upon one fundamental fact, one key event, one central reality: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This one historical incident is the basis for the Christian faith. Everything, literally EVERYTHING, hinges on this event. We have already covered this ground on Easter Sunday. Now, we're spending some time looking at the implications of this reality.

A BIG implication is how the reality of the resurrection affects our perspective of pain, suffering, decay, and death. Pain, suffering, decay and death are certainties of life. It takes no "faith" to acknowledge that. But how we deal with these eventualities demonstrate what we truly "believe".

In the message on Sunday, three different ways/perspectives were mentioned: The secular perspective, the religious perspective, and the Jesus perspective. (***)Please note the separation of Jesus from religion. Jesus did not come to start a religion. Rather, He came to tell us about reality, and how to live into that reality. Yes, a religion—which is a man-made category system—has birthed in the wake of Jesus, but the propagation and maintenance of a religion

has nothing to do with the purpose of Jesus. It is easy for followers of Jesus to settle for the Christian religion, and not truly experience the Kingdom life of Jesus.***)

The secular perspective of pain, suffering, decay and death is that there is nothing that can be done about it, so eat drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die. With this perspective, there is no hope, and the best you can wish for is as little pain and suffering as possible, and as slow a rate of decay as possible, which is at best a crap shoot.

The religious perspective of pain, suffering, decay and death is that you get what's coming to you. At best, religion can help you appease God and garner God's favor. (Obviously different religions have different views/ideas of what they mean by "God".) But should pain and suffering come your way, you deserved it.

The Jesus perspective of pain, suffering, decay and death is that while they are eventualities, they DO NOT have the last word, and can/will be redeemed for good purposes. Beyond that, pain suffering, decay, and death are in fact overcome and beaten. How do we know this? What is our basis for such a hope? How is it not simply wishful thinking? Exhibit A: the resurrection of Jesus.

Another important implication of the resurrection of Jesus is that high value it placed on our physical bodies. We WILL NOT end up as spiritual beings in some ethereal place ("heaven" as it is often conceived). Rather, we will be resurrected with new, uncorrupted bodies. We truly are, integrated, holistic beings—body, mind, soul, and spirit. (It is more of a gnostic idea that we are somehow spirits trapped in physical bodies. The incarnation and resurrection of Jesus dispel such notions.) And while our physical bodies will decay, wear out, and eventually poop out on us, our bodies will be redeemed, restored, remade incorruptible at the Resurrection (see I Corinthians 15). Our bodies, like everything else entrusted to us, ought to be stewarded well.

So when we, or those we love and care about, are really up against it (and sooner or later we all will be) we have the resurrection of Jesus to give us hope and strength, peace and fortitude. As followers of Jesus we are not protected from such times, rather we are formed through such times, and overcome them because Jesus' resurrection. As Jesus said, "*In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*" (John 16:33b) Notice: "WILL HAVE" ...not "might have". And "the world" in this context is both the oppressive, unjust structures and systems that currently have sway on this planet, as well as the system of corruption in which everything is subject to decay and degradation. The resurrection of Jesus is God's pronouncement against it, as well as the proof that's He's doing something about it.

Q. In what ways have you experienced the wearing out (the decay) of your physical body?

Q. What are you doing to be a good steward of your physical body? (*)HG Leaders, please be careful if you decide to use this question. This can be a delicate issue. Unlike other issues—which can be more easily hidden—how well we steward our**

bodies can be readily apparent and may be sensitive topic for some. Please be careful.***)

- Q. Describe/share some pain and suffering you have experienced. How did it affect your relationship with God? How was it a formative experience in your life?**
- Q. Describe/share a time when you cried out “Why? God!” Looking back, what good came out of that experience? (***) HG Leaders, again, another delicate/sensitive topic. For some, they may still be struggling or waiting for something good/positive to result or be identified. Avoid the temptation of figuring it out for them. Rather, enter the struggle with them, embrace their pain with them.)**
- Q. The main passage for this week (see above) encourages us to “fix our eyes on what is unseen”...that is Jesus and the present reality of His Kingdom around us. How do we do that? What are some ways you “fix your eyes on Jesus”? How can we encourage one another toward that end?**
- Q. The apostle Paul was well acquainted with pain and suffering, and he is admired by many (appropriately so) as an inspiration. Who is someone you know personally that is an inspiration to you for having gone through some serious stuff?**
- Q. How has the resurrection of Jesus given you hope, practically speaking? Or, how has your faith in Jesus given you courage to persevere?**
- Q. Even during times of relative ease (no active pain or suffering) how has the resurrection of Jesus given you peace, assuredness, calm, and perspective?**
- Q. What gives you confidence that God is making all things new?**