

# Small Group Study

## Our Vision

To know God and enjoy Him forever.

## Our Mission

To build a Christian community by making fully devoted disciples of non-religious and nominally religious people



## Discussion

### Power with Purpose: The Blessing No One Wants

## Scripture

Have volunteers read the following scriptures:

Acts 21:10-14, 2 Corinthians 11:24-28, Matthew 5:10-12

## Introduction

If you were to walk the aisles of any pharmacy in America you'd find that one of their most popular products is pain killers. They have shelves that are packed with plastic bottles of Ibuprofen, Acetaminophen, Aspirin, and Aleve. These pills of course come in tablets or caplets-which are easier -- less painful -- to swallow. You can buy them in large bottles holding as many as 250 pills or handy pocket-sized containers of only 8. Some are even combined with decongestants so you can "kill two pains with one stone". Other shelves contain tubes of "rub-on pain relief" like Ben Gay. There are also ice packs and heating pads that promise to soothe our aching muscles.

Stores stock all these products because pain relief is big business in America. We spend billions of dollars each year trying to alleviate our hurts and pains. This is because none of us want to hurt....everyone wants to live a pain-free life. Comfort is very important to us.

This is often true when it comes to the Christian walk. Theologian, J. I. PACKER writes, "The other day...as I sat in the hot tub savoring the warmth...adjusting to the feel of being bubbled over from all angles, ...it struck me that the hot tub is the perfect symbol of the modern route to religion. The hot tub experience is sensuous, relaxing, floppy, laid-back: not in any way demanding...but very, very nice, even to the point of being great fun. Many today want Christianity to be like that and labor to make it so."

Maybe this is why we have a hard time understanding Paul when he says, "I am ready to not only be bound, but to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord."

## Ice Breaker

Use ONE of the questions to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

- 1.** What are three things that make you happy?
- 2.** What is the worst physical pain you've ever had to endure?
- 3.** If you had to lose either your eyesight, your hearing, or your sense of touch, which would you choose to give up and why?

Paul also said in 2 Timothy 1:8, "Never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News."

In Philippians 1:29 he wrote, "For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him."

## Questions

- I. Why would Paul talk this way? Why would he act as if pain and suffering were a *good* thing?
2. Read Romans 8:28. Many of you may be familiar with this verse. What is Paul really saying here? What part do we have to play in this process?
3. How has God used suffering in your life for His glory? Is there a trial or suffering you went through that now, in retrospect, you see God's hand in?
4. How would you explain suffering to someone that questions God's motives?
5. Read James 1:2-4. What parts of this passage seem to go against common sense? What parts of this passage make sense?
6. According to James, what is the purpose of suffering?
7. How has suffering in the past helped *you* develop perseverance?
8. How can perseverance better enable us to love the people around us?
9. How would you describe a "mature Christian"? What are the character traits and personal habits of a mature Christian?
10. Can someone be a mature Christian without suffering? Why or why not?
11. Is there something you are currently suffering with right now? How might God be using this suffering to "complete you"?
12. Take time to pray for those in the group who are currently dealing with trials or suffering.

God bless,  
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