



## SHEPHERDING THROUGH TRIALS

**PASTOR BRIAN FLEWELLING**

**NOVEMBER 23, 2025**

### WORSHIP

Begin your group with a time of worship. If someone in your group can lead worship, invite them to lead two or three songs. Alternatively, consider using one or more of these songs from our Sunday morning worship time:

- **We Praise You** (*Phil Wickham*)
- **Holy Forever** (*Hillsong Worship*)
- **Touch Of Heaven** (*Charity Gayle*)

### SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- 1 Peter 4:12-19
- Job 2:12-13

### OPENING PRAYER (10 min)

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word, and to help group members understand their identity as living stones in His spiritual house.

### Ice Breaker (5-10 min)

What's one thing that surprised you this week—good or bad? How did you respond to it?

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS (5 mins)**

1. Expect difficulties as part of life and the Christian journey – Don't be surprised when trials come; prepare yourself mentally and spiritually for challenges.
2. You are a participant, not a victim – Shift from reactive thinking to understanding that following Christ means actively engaging in His mission, which includes suffering.
3. Christ is present in the middle of suffering – He's not waiting on the other side; He's with you in the depths of your pain.
4. Commit to God's faithfulness and continue doing good – Don't back out of your resolve when trials intensify.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (35-40 min)**

1. What does Peter mean when he says "do not be surprised" by fiery trials? How does this challenge our typical response to suffering?
2. Discuss the ironies Pastor Brian highlighted: sufferings/overjoyed, insulted/blessed, shame/praise. How does this "upside-down kingdom" differ from the world's values?
3. What's the difference between suffering "as a Christian" (v.16) versus suffering as a consequence of our own poor choices (v.15)?

### **Personal Reflection**

4. Have you ever experienced a time when you felt closer to God during suffering than during comfortable seasons? Share your story if you're comfortable.
5. Peter says we "participate" in Christ's sufferings rather than just experiencing them passively. How does this shift in perspective change how you view current or past difficulties?
6. On a scale of 1-10, how prepared do you feel for trials or grief? What would help you be more resilient?

### **Helping Others Through Grief**

7. Review the five practical tips for helping others in grief:
  - a. Don't talk about yourself
  - b. Don't say "I know how you feel"
  - c. Don't try to save them from pain
  - d. Don't offer generic comments

- e. Don't avoid the situation
- 8. Which of these is hardest for you? Why do you think we struggle to simply "be present" with those who are suffering?
- 9. Job's friends sat with him in silence for seven days. When have you experienced the ministry of presence—either receiving it or giving it?

### **Processing Our Own Grief**

- 10. Review the six tips for those going through grief:
  - a. Process it; don't ignore it
  - b. Express your grief to God
  - c. Surround yourself with the right people
  - d. It's okay not to feel normal
  - e. There's no timeline
  - f. Vocalize your needs

### **Which of these resonates most with you? Is there one you need to practice better?**

- 11. The sermon mentioned that "the way of Christ is a lifestyle of discipline, crushing, and death which leads to resurrection and new life." How have you seen this pattern play out in your own spiritual journey?

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATION (10 Mins)**

### **This Week's Challenge (Choose One or More):**

#### **For Personal Growth:**

- Spend time this week journaling about a current or past trial. Ask God to show you where He was present in it and what facet of Christ's character you discovered through it.
- Prepare yourself mentally for potential difficulties by identifying 2-3 challenges you might face and praying through how you'll respond with faith rather than surprise.

#### **For Others:**

- Identify someone in your life who is grieving or suffering. Reach out this week—not with advice, but with presence. Send a text, make a call, or visit simply to listen and say "I'm sorry."
- If you know someone who has experienced loss, ask them specifically about their loved one. Honor the deceased by remembering them in conversation.

**For Your Group:**

- Share prayer requests related to current trials or anticipated challenges. Commit to checking in with each other throughout the week.
- Consider reading Psalm 34 together and discussing verse 18: "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

**CLOSING PRAYER**

Invite group members to pray for:

- Those currently experiencing grief or trials
- Courage to be present with others in their pain
- Faith to continue doing good even when it's costly
- Eyes to see Christ in the midst of suffering