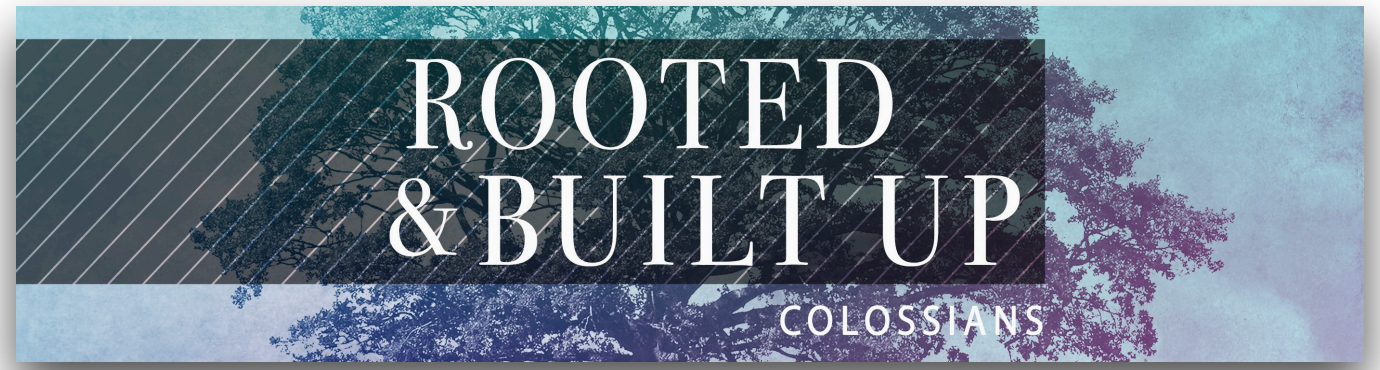


Small Group Guide: Rejoicing in Suffering for the Gospel

Based on Colossians 1:24-29

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to understand what it means to rejoice in suffering for the sake of the gospel and His kingdom.

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Question: Share about a time when going through something difficult ended up producing unexpected growth or strength in your life. How did that experience change your perspective?

Key Scripture

Colossians 1:24-29

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me, for you to make known the word of God fully known..."

Key Takeaways

1. **When our hearts are captivated by Jesus and His love for us, it changes our perspective on everything else in this life.**

2. **God forges in the believer's heart and in the church through suffering what comfort cannot do.**

3. **The Lord did not save you to put you in spiritual retirement—when salvation came to you, it was on its way to someone else.**

4. **Paul's sufferings were motivated by mission—taking the gospel one step further, regardless of the cost.**

Discussion Questions (30-40 minutes)

Understanding the Text

1. **The Diamond Illustration:** The sermon opened with a story about people digging a massive hole because they discovered diamonds. How does this illustrate Paul's motivation for enduring suffering? What is your "diamond" that motivates you?

2. **Paul's Suffering List:** Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 where Paul lists his sufferings. What strikes you most about this list? How does Paul's attitude differ from how we typically respond to hardship?

3. **Rejoicing in Suffering:** Multiple passages (Romans 5:3-5, 1 Peter 4:13, James 1:2) call believers to rejoice in suffering. Why is this such a consistent theme in Scripture? What makes this possible?

Personal Reflection

4. **Comfort vs. Character:** The sermon stated, "God forges in the believer's heart and in the church through suffering what comfort cannot do." What has God forged in you through difficult seasons that would not have developed in comfort?

5. **Our Default Response:** The sermon mentioned that "we often find this dark place in our souls when we have a flat tire." How would you honestly describe your typical response to inconvenience or suffering? What does this reveal about what captivates your heart?

6. **Clear Picture of Jesus:** The sermon suggested Paul could endure suffering because "he had a really, really clear picture of Jesus." How clear is your picture of Jesus? What practices help you maintain that clarity?

Application

7. **Kissing the Wave:** Charles Spurgeon said, "I have learned to kiss the wave that slams me into the rock of ages." What current "wave" might God be using to push you closer to Christ rather than something to escape from?

8. **Mission and Suffering:** Paul saw his sufferings as filling up what was lacking in taking the gospel further. How does viewing hardship through the lens of mission change your perspective? Where might God be calling you to step into mission despite potential suffering?

9. **Corporate Suffering:** The sermon emphasized that "when one of us suffers, we all suffer" and highlighted the importance of corporate prayer. How can this group better support one another through suffering? Are there specific ways we can pray together right now?

Practical Applications (15 minutes)

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Reframe a Current Struggle

- Identify one current difficulty you're facing
- Instead of immediately praying for deliverance, pray: "God, what are you trying to teach me through this? How can this grow me closer to You?"
- Journal what God reveals

Option 2: Step into Mission Despite Cost

- Identify one person God has placed on your heart who needs the gospel
- Take one concrete step toward sharing Jesus with them this week, even if it feels uncomfortable or risky
- Share your experience with the group next week

Option 3: Practice Corporate Suffering

- Reach out to someone in the church or this group who is walking through hardship
- Don't just offer to pray—actually pray with them (in person, phone, or video call)
- Ask them what God is teaching them through their struggle

Option 4: Cultivate a Clearer Picture of Jesus

- Spend 15 minutes daily this week meditating on what Jesus endured for you (read through the Passion narratives in the Gospels)
- Write down how this shapes your perspective on your current circumstances

Closing Exercise (10 minutes)

Group Prayer Time:

1. Share one area where you're currently experiencing or avoiding suffering
2. Have the group gather around (physically or in focus) to pray for each person
3. Pray specifically that God would:
    - Give clear vision of Jesus
    - Forge character through current circumstances
    - Use each person's suffering for gospel advancement
    - Help the group walk through hardship together

Memory Verse for the Week

Colossians 1:27-28 "*To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ*."