

Wonderful Light ... Hope is Forged in Pain

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Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong! Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit. – 1 Peter 3:13-18 NLT

Talking Points

- Pain is not optional in this life, and contrary to what we think, that's a good thing.
- Hope is tested and forged in the crucible of pain and suffering.
- It's an orientation of the spirit, an inner confidence that gives us strength, regardless of how well things are going.
- It's what inspires us to keep trying new things, fighting for something good, even when success is not sure.
- Suffering for doing good is a much better option, than suffering for doing wrong, or just doing nothing at all.
- Nothing truly great can be achieved without pain, and our threshold for pain will determine how far we go.
- The Christian life is about infinite gratification, not instant gratification.

In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation. 1 Peter 5:10 NLT

Discussion Questions

1. What is the most encouraging thing you're learning about suffering?
2. What is Peter teaching you about hope that is most helpful to you?
3. What are some good things that require us to suffer to achieve them?

The Other Lunch Challenge

Take someone to lunch who has a different view of religion, politics, sports, sexual orientation, race, abortion, climate change, immigration, gun control, the death penalty. Invite an evangelical Christian, liberal Christian, atheist ... anyone who is on the other side from you. It could be someone of a different race or religion too.

The purpose is not to convince them of anything or to defend anything you believe, but to get to know them, and why they believe as they do. Share personal life experiences, and talk about your families, and seek to know who they are behind the issues. The purpose is making a connection.

And don't forget to buy their lunch.

Then share your story with us at MiddletownChristian.org/hearmystory or on social media with the hashtag #mcchearmystory.

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Group Life @ Middletown

If you are interested in taking part in a sermon-based discussion group or other small group, visit middletownchristian.org or contact Tracey Spann, tspann@middletownchristian.org to learn more.

Middletown Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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