



ENTER God's presence

But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.

- Psalm 10:14

Heavenly Father, You know the things we suffer and struggle with. You know and provide everything we need to overcome our struggles in your Word. Give us ears to hear your words of comfort and strength as we gather today. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **Where have you seen God's power at work in your life this last week?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **What does boldness mean to you? What makes someone or something 'bold'?**
4. **Is there an area of your life you would like to be more bold in? Explain.**

It's the buzzword of 2020 - the "new normal". It's a phrase that is repeated countless times as people recognise that COVID-19 has changed life as we know it and a 'new normal' is needed to live by. But have things really changed that much? The same thing that has always paralysed people, discouraged people, robbed them of courage and hope, and caused worldviews to shrink is still present and controlling lives across the globe. It's called fear. But God has already called us to a new normal through the resurrection of his Son Jesus. It's a life of boldness that comes from trusting in the amazing work of his grace that has and will be accomplished in us and through us. Suffering will not stop his transforming work. Circumstances don't limit his ability to redeem and restore. His hand holds you, his love strengthens you, his mercy sustains you, his compassion cares for you and his power is in you enabling us to move together with boldness until we share in the fullness of his victory and eternal glory. We'll celebrate that today.

Week beginning:
Sunday 24th May 2020

Worship series:
MOVE TOGETHER
In Boldness (#6 in series)



VERSE for the week

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

-1 Peter 5:10



REMEMBER this week

In times of suffering, you are never alone. God not only cares for your deepest anxieties but he has overcome them all so your 'new normal' can be living boldly in his name. Whatever you face, the Lord will restore, empower, strengthen and establish you. That's his promise.



LISTEN attentively

Read 1 Peter 4:12-14

- 5. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
- 6. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
- 7. What do you think it means to share in the sufferings of Christ? In what ways do we do this today?**

The people of the early church experienced much suffering and insecurity. Many of the Roman Emperors after the death of Jesus, looked unfavourably on the early Christians as a destabilising element of the empire and therefore a threat to Roman government and rule. This often led to periods of widespread persecution of Christians in the first few centuries of the Church. It is no real surprise then that Peter addresses the suffering that many Christians were experiencing. In many ways, the concept of suffering began to be considered part of what it was to be a Christian. We see some of this attitude reflected in the way Peter talks about suffering in chapter 4.



GROW deeper

- 8. Peter says to not be surprised by suffering when it comes. Do you think we still expect to encounter suffering the way Peter did, or does it come as a surprise when hard times hit us?**
- 9. When is the last time you remember experiencing suffering because of your faith?**

The situation changed considerably for Christians at the beginning of the 4th Century when Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and cleared the way for Christianity to become the dominant religion of the Empire. Suddenly the persecution which had existed was no longer part of the regular experience of Christians. Strangely enough, this was a difficult transition for many who had come to identify their struggle and suffering as an integral part of their Christian life. This time in church history saw an explosion of people taking up a monastic lifestyle of self imposed hardship and affliction.

- 10. What role do you think suffering has in the life of a Christian today? What forms does it take and how is it helpful/harmful?**

Now Read 1 Peter 5:6-11

Often we let fear of suffering stop us from making bold choices. Boldness has associated with it a sense of confidence and conviction. Even when the odds are stacked against us or the likelihood of a positive outcome seems small, boldness drives us forward knowing that we serve a greater purpose and a higher power. Peter's boldness came from knowing who he served. It came from knowing that whatever happened, God was in control and that no matter what Peter suffered, God would bring ultimate restoration in the end.

- 11. How have you seen God work justice in your daily life? Are there still difficult and unjust situations you can think of in your life that feel unresolved?**
- 12. How does the thought of God's eternal judgement and justice help you to bear up under your immediate and temporal suffering and injustice?**



LIVE purposefully

One of the practices of many monastic orders and also many other religions is the practice of fasting. Traditionally, fasts were a period of time that a limited diet, or in some cases, no food at all was consumed. The practice served a number of purposes. It was, and is, considered a practice which curtails our unhealthy appetites and helps us to focus on hungering for God and His Word. The focus is not on suffering per se, but the reminder of hunger, can be used as a tool to help us focus on our need for Christ over our physical needs.

13. **If you were going to fast this week, what would you sacrifice from your life? It does not have to be food, but should be something that you use regularly that would remind you of your dependence on God.**
14. **In many cases, Western civilization has developed the understanding that humanity can supply all the solutions to all of its own problems. Think of a problem you are facing in your life at the moment. It may be personal, or family, or work related. Deliberately spend time in prayer this week asking God to help you find the way forward. Trust him to deliver you.**



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for the way he leads his church throughout the world and for his blessings and protection for us at this time.
- Ask God to bless those around the world who still suffer persecution for their allegiance to Jesus. Ask that they may be bold in their faith and that many would come to God because of them.
- Pray for those who feel weak or oppressed at this time. Pray that Holy Spirit would give them a boldness to trust and cling to the promises of God to deliver them.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

Name, live boldly and without fear, for Jesus cares for you. Amen.