



ENTER God's presence

Psalm 22:1-5

**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
Why are you so far away when I groan for help?
Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.
Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief.
Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.
Our ancestors trusted in you, and you rescued them.
They cried out to you and were saved. They trusted in you and
were never disgraced.**

Loving heavenly Father, you sent your Son Jesus Christ into this world to suffer and reconcile the world to yourself. Strengthen our faith, so that we remain united with him and bear the fruit of love, even when we experience trial and suffering in our own lives. We ask this in the name of the Lamb who is our Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **Share your highs and lows since you last met each other?**
2. **Who was/is your favourite Superhero and why?**
3. **Every scar tells a story. Share the story of one of your scars.**
4. **How do you explain suffering that you see in the world?**

It's the stuff of fairy tales, blockbuster movies and novels galore. A knight in shining armour rides in town, defeats the bad guys and saves the day. Deep down we are all holding out for a 'hero' to save us from the suffering of life. We long for someone who will deliver us from distress. We will go to extraordinary lengths to maximise pleasure and minimise pain and hurt in our lives, at whatever cost or compromise. But God opens our eyes to reality: in life, pain is a given, suffering is to be expected and hurt will be experienced. Wherever there is sin, there will be struggle and suffering. That's the unavoidable reality we face and no knight in shining armour can deliver you from that, no matter what they promise. But wherever there is faith there is hope. The one who was slain, raised & opens the seals on eternity is the one who leads you through suffering with hope, to victory with more joy than you can ever imagine. In Christ risen and ruling over all, the Father is Redeeming Suffering for his purposes in this world & for his glory to be seen in us. We'll explore and experience that together!



VERSE for the week

"These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:14



REMEMBER this week

**In times of great suffering,
there is great salvation!**



Read Revelation 6:1-11; 7:9-17

I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come!” ² I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

³ When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” ⁴ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.

⁵ When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, “Two pounds of wheat for a day’s wages, and six pound of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!”

⁷ When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” ⁸ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰ They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” ¹¹ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters were killed just as they had been. ⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying:

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore,

“they are before the throne of God

and serve him day and night in his temple;

and he who sits on the throne

will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶ ‘Never again will they hunger;

never again will they thirst.

The sun will not beat down on them,’

nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb at the centre of the throne

will be their shepherd;

‘he will lead them to springs of living water.’

‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’

5. What is your first impression of these verses? What speaks to you? Challenges you? Confuses you?

6. What is the significance of John hearing the number of those who are sealed?

7. What are the multitude doing and why is this important? What can we learn from that?

8. What do you notice about what happens as each seal is opened?



GROW deeper

9. *Why does suffering often make us question God?*
10. *What hope does Chapter 7 give?*
11. *What do you learn about God in this passage?*
12. *What does it mean that God's people are sealed?*
13. *Own today's Bible verse. Retell Revelation 6:1-11 & 7:9-17 in your own words.*

“The church is sealed with grace to suffer with certain hope!”

Mark Schultz



LIVE purposefully

14. *Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?*
15. *There are 7 promises made to the multitude in 7:14-17, what are they and how do they give you hope and assurance in times of trial and suffering?*
16. *Which of these promises do you most need to hear and claim in your own life at this time?*
17. *How can the suffering you have experienced or the scars that you bear be a testimony of God's presence in your life that brings hope to others in the midst of their suffering?*



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for his constant love and presence in our lives even in suffering. Thank Jesus for taking on our suffering so that our scars can be covered with his robe of righteousness. Ask the Holy Spirit for a faith that clings to Jesus in difficult circumstances.
- Pray for all Christians that we may not bubble wrap ourselves from the world but reveal God's purpose in our lives, even in the midst of trials, struggles and suffering as we live with hope.
- Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom to discern the imposters that ride into your lives with empty promises.
- Pray for healing for your broken, dented, scarred, and mishandled lives that you may continue to endure and hang in there in times when it is easier to give up.
- Pray for the sick, the weak, the vulnerable in the Church, community, and those that you know in your own lives.
- Ask the Father to give you someone (or two or three) to pray for, asking the Father to draw them to him. (John 6:44,45)
- Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest, remembering you might be the very answer to the prayer that you pray.

REMEMBER:

**In times of great suffering,
there is great salvation!**



BLESS one another

Make the sign of the cross in the air or on their forehead or palm of the hand of another person as you say...

[Name], you have been sealed in Christ and are safe forever. Amen.