

## Everyone Has a Story

1 Peter 1:3-9

### Introduction:

We don't look alike, dress alike, or act alike. We have different tastes in the food we eat, the books we read, the cars we drive, and the music we enjoy. We have different backgrounds, jobs, and hobbies. Our weights vary and so do our heights. But there is one thing we share in common:

**We all know what it means to hurt.**

Suffering is the universal language of mankind.

When life hurts and dreams fade, we may express our brokenness in different ways, but each one knows (or will know) the sting of pain, hurt, and heartbreak. Be it disease, divorce, death, and/or depression, life has a way of knocking you down to your knees.

*If you think you're the only one who walked in here tonight who is hurt, think again. Someone said, "Preach to broken hearts, there is one on every pew." Wrong. There is more than one.*

We must understand that there is no one-size-fits-all simple solution to suffering. I don't have all the answers, but I know Who does. And this: **if your faith counts for anything, it must count for everything when life gets hard.**

Are you going to give up on God because things happen you don't understand? Do you want your children to give up on you when things happen (perhaps because of decisions you've made or allowed in their best interest) because they don't understand? Sometimes God asks of His children the very same thing we ask of ours: *Trust Me.*

**Suffering does not make you unique.**

**It's how you respond to it that makes you unique.**

### Discussion:

#### I. 1st Peter — A Powerful Letter of Hope

- A. Peter draws upon a theme (suffering) that people of all ages share in common. Thus, he writes to put their pain (and ours) into perspective by reminding all of us that regardless of what happens, we have a living hope because we have a living Savior (**v.3**).
- B. **Because He Lives!** *Because He lives ... I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know who holds the future, And life is worth the living, just because He lives.*

#### II. Four Truths About Trials

- A. **Trials are \_\_\_\_\_, v.6.** Sometimes God uses suffering to get our attention, or to teach us a lesson, or to forge needed character, or to teach us humility and to depend upon Him. We tend to be very self-sufficient, until ... (**Ps.119:71**)
  - 1. **James 1:2** — "Consider it joy when you encounter various trials ..." It's not "if," but "when."
  - 2. If your life is painful, you are not the exception, but the norm. Thus, we tend to focus so much on our pain that we fail to see the pain in others.
  - 3. The kind of joy of which James and Peter write, it a joy that rises above adversity and sets an example of faith before others. Faith doesn't minimize pain; it simply puts a new perspective on it — God's perspective!
- B. **Trials are \_\_\_\_\_, v.6b.** It never helps anyone to trivialize the suffering of others. "Though suffering itself is universal, each experience is unique" (Sitzer). In other words, the parent who lost a son in Iraq is not comforted to know that your grandfather lost a cousin in WWII.
  - 1. Comparisons seldom comfort. There are times when wisdom says to employ silence (**Ecc1.3:7b**) and merely weep with the hurting (**Rom.12:15**).
  - 2. Jesus never compared trials. Time after time, however, He reached across the path of pain to offer a compassionate hand. And sometimes ... He just sat down and cried with people.

- C. **Trials come in \_\_\_\_\_ ways, v.6c.** Trials can be physical, emotional, relational, financial, or spiritual. They can come suddenly or slowly. They can be public or private. They can be related to your sin, to someone else's sin, or to no sin at all. Regardless, God has no trouble matching the color of His grace to the shade of your trial (**2 Cor.12:9**). Regardless of what you are facing, rely on His strength (**Neh.8:10**).
- D. **Trials have a purpose** — \_\_\_\_\_, **v.7.** It is through the refining fire of God's furnace that our faith is forged. Q: *Will your faith melt away under pressure? Or ... Will you come forth shinning like purified gold?* It's your choice.
1. The most powerful thing God gives you is the power to choose your response and attitude. And it is a choice that you have to make and remake each day.
  2. If you think you're going to wake up tomorrow and *Poof!* — all the nastiness of life is going to disappear, think again. Yet, He will give you the strength and peace to get through today. And tomorrow, He will do the same (**Matt.6:34**).

**Conclusion:**

"... but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength ... They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." **Isaiah 40:31** (NIV)

**God cannot use you greatly until He has broken you completely. Ask Job. Ask Joseph. Ask Saul. Ask Peter.**