Discussion Guide | Romans 5:1-5 | Hope and Suffering

Gathering Question:
What is one way you've seen God at work in your life this week?

Gathering Prayer
Father, by Your Spirit, would you guide us into all truth. Help us to hear and be attentive to Your voice as we work through this study. In the name of Jesus, Your Son, we pray. Amen.

Opening Questions
- What stood out to you in the sermon?
- What insights did you gain?
- What questions did it raise?

Read Romans 5:1-5

Peace: God is not against us.
- Romans 5:1 says that, because we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ. How does knowing you have been reconciled to God change how you understand difficult circumstances?
- "We don't relate to God through a math equation." What are some ways we try to turn our relationship with God into a transaction—doing certain things in order to get something from him?
- When you experience suffering, disappointment, or hardship, how would it look to begin with the conviction that God is for you rather than the suspicion that he is against you?

Grace: We are not alone.
- Romans 5:2 says that through Jesus Christ we have gained access by faith into the grace in which we now stand. What does it mean to have access to God? How is that different from simply being allowed to approach him occasionally?
- Why do you think suffering so often leads people to withdraw, isolate themselves, or hide what they're going through? What role does shame play in this response?
- Why is it important that we try not to face suffering alone? What makes it difficult to ask others for prayer or help?
- Is there a burden, struggle, or hardship you've been carrying alone that you need to bring to God or share with someone in the church? What would it look like to take that step this week?

Love: We have nothing to fear.
- Romans 5:3–5 says that suffering produces perseverance, character, and hope. How have you seen God use a difficult season in your life to develop perseverance or deepen your faith?

- We cannot always expect to know why suffering happens or if there's a quick fix to make it go away. Why is it difficult for us to accept that? What do we tend to expect God to do when we are suffering?
- Luther's distinction between a theology of glory and a theology of the cross challenges us to look for God's presence not only in what appears successful, powerful, and impressive, but also in the suffering of Jesus. How might this change the way we interpret our own circumstances?
- Romans 5:5 says that God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. What difference does it make to know that the Holy Spirit gives us the assurance of God's love, rather than something we have to manufacture through positive thinking or stronger feelings?

Closing Prayer