



Small Group Study Guide

Takeaways / Discussion / Application / Prayer

THE CENTRAL IDEA & KEY TAKEAWAYS

God does not waste our pain

This guide is designed to help your group engage deeply with the sermon "Pain in the Process." The central idea is that God does not waste our pain -- He uses it as an instrument to shape and form us into the people He has called us to be. Use these questions, takeaways, and applications to encourage honest conversation and spiritual growth within your group.

- 1 Pain is not evidence of God's absence.** God's presence is not determined by our circumstances. Scripture affirms that He is near to the brokenhearted and that He will never leave or forsake us. Pain does not mean God has stepped away -- it often means He is doing something deep within us.
- 2 Pain is an opportunity, not just an obstacle.** James 1:2-4 calls believers to consider trials an opportunity for great joy because testing produces endurance, and endurance produces completeness. The invitation is to shift our perspective from "when will this end?" to "what is God forming in me?"
- 3 Suffering produces a spiritual chain reaction.** Romans 5:3-5 outlines a progression: suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character, and character produces hope. None of these can be skipped or fast-tracked.
- 4 Pain reveals what is on the inside.** Just as squeezing fruit reveals what it contains, the pressures of life reveal what is in us -- both the things that need to be addressed and the faith we did not know we had.
- 5 God forms character through what we would never choose.** Some of the deepest growth God produces in us comes through circumstances we would never have selected for ourselves. He is always at work, even when we cannot see the full picture.

GROUP DISCUSSION

God's presence in pain

- 01** Think of a time in your life when something painful turned out to produce unexpected growth or change. Without going into too much detail, what did that season teach you?
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- 02** The sermon stated that "God's presence isn't proved by the absence of pain -- God's presence is often revealed by how he sustains us through the pain." Do you find it easy or difficult to believe God is with you when you are suffering? What makes it hard?
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- 03** Read Psalm 34:18 (the Lord is near to the brokenhearted). How does this verse challenge the idea that pain is a sign God has pulled away from us?
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- 04** Have you ever had someone suggest -- directly or indirectly -- that your pain was proof that God was not with you? How did that affect you, and how does Scripture respond to that idea?
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GROUP DISCUSSION

An opportunity for growth

05 James 1:2-4 instructs believers to consider trials an opportunity for great joy. Be honest -- how do you typically respond when pain or trouble enters your life? What would it look like to respond differently?

06 The sermon described two ways we can use pain as an opportunity: to complain, or to allow growth. Which tendency do you find yourself defaulting to, and why?

07 What does it mean practically to "not waste the pain?" What would that look like in a current situation you or someone in your group is facing?

GROUP DISCUSSION

What pressure reveals

- 08** The sermon used the image of squeezing fruit -- whatever is inside comes out under pressure. When life squeezes you, what tends to come out? Are you comfortable sharing that with the group?

- 09** The pastor mentioned qualities like bitterness, fear, pride, anger, and insecurity as things pain can expose. He also noted that pain can reveal faith we did not know we had. Have you experienced either of these?

- 10** David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24, asking God to search him, know his heart, and lead him in the right way. How would it change your experience of pain if you prayed that kind of prayer in the middle of a difficult season?

GROUP DISCUSSION

From suffering to hope

- 11** Nicole shared that she lost family members, her job, and her home -- none of which she would have chosen. Yet she expressed genuine faith and even excitement about what God is doing. What stood out to you about her testimony?

- 12** The sermon said, "You can't have a testimony without a test." How have past painful seasons become part of your testimony today?

- 13** Romans 5:3-5 describes a progression from suffering to hope. Where do you find yourself in that progression right now -- in the suffering, the perseverance, the character development, or the hope?

- 14** The pastor suggested modifying our prayer from "God, get me out of this" to "God, I know you can take away the pain, but if you don't, I know you are with me -- help me through it and help me glorify you in it." How does that prayer shift change the way you approach your current pain or difficulty?

THIS WEEK

Put it into practice

This week, try one or more of the following:

- 1 Reframe your prayer.** If you are currently in a painful season, write out a prayer that moves away from asking only for relief and toward asking God what He is forming in you. Be specific about what you are going through and honest about how you feel.
- 2 Identify what the pressure is revealing.** Set aside time this week to quietly reflect on what comes out of you when life squeezes you. Journal about it. Are there patterns of fear, control, bitterness, or insecurity that keep surfacing? Bring those honestly before God and ask Him to work in those areas.
- 3 Memorize one anchor verse.** Choose one of the following passages to memorize or meditate on throughout the week:
 - James 1:2-4 (trials as opportunity for joy and growth)
 - Romans 5:3-5 (suffering producing perseverance, character, and hope)
 - Isaiah 43:2 (God's presence through water and fire)
 - Psalm 34:18 (God near to the brokenhearted)
- 4 Encourage someone in pain.** Think of someone in your life who is currently going through a difficult season. Reach out to them this week -- not to fix their situation or offer easy answers, but simply to remind them that God has not left them and that you are with them.
- 5 Ask the better question.** When you feel the pressure of pain this week, practice replacing "God, when will this end?" with "God, what are you revealing to me, and what are you forming in me?" Notice how that question changes your posture toward the situation.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray together

Close your time together by praying as a group over the following:

- Those in the group who are currently walking through physical, relational, financial, or spiritual pain
- That God would make His presence known to each person, not by removing the difficulty but by sustaining them through it
- That your group would grow in faith, trust, and Christ-like character through whatever seasons God has each of you in
- That none of you would waste the pain, but would allow God to use it for His purposes and your growth

PRAYER REQUESTS

LOOKING AHEAD

Next week's sermon will continue this series with a look at how to keep your faith while you are hurting. Come prepared to dig into that topic together.