SMALL GROUP / STUDY GUIDE

1 Peter 4:12–19 — Don't Be Surprised

SCRIPTURE

Read 1 Peter 4:12–19. Also read John 16:33 and 1 Peter 1:6–7 as you consider how hope in Jesus helps us remain faithful through suffering.

KEY TRUTH

Because God is faithful and our future with Jesus is secure, we can entrust ourselves to Him and keep doing good through life's storms.

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS
(What does the passage say?)

What does Peter tell believers not to be surprised by in verse 12? What purpose does he identify for this trial?

According to verse 13, what can believers rejoice in now, and what future event can they look forward to?

Why does Peter call those who are insulted for the name of Christ blessed in verse 14?

What distinction does Peter make between the suffering described in verse 15 and suffering as a Christian in verse 16?

Where does Peter say judgment begins in verse 17?

What does Peter instruct suffering believers to do in verse 19, and how does he describe God?

INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS
(What does the passage mean?)

Why might believers be surprised when following Jesus brings hardship? What expectations about God or obedience might suffering expose?

The passage focuses on suffering for following Christ. How does recognizing that context help us understand Peter's encouragement and apply it thoughtfully to other hardships?

How can rejoicing in Christ coexist with grief, fear, or disappointment? Why doesn't rejoicing require pretending that suffering is painless?

How does the promise of Christ's coming glory change the way we understand the cost of following Him today?

Why is it important to distinguish suffering for Jesus from suffering because of our own wrongdoing or treatment of others?

How does 1 Peter 1:6–7 help us understand the refining work God can accomplish through trials?

What does it mean to entrust ourselves to a "faithful Creator"? How does continuing to do good express that trust?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS
(What does this mean for us?)

When life becomes difficult, what questions are you most likely to ask God? What helps you bring those questions honestly to Him?

Where do you tend to turn when life feels out of control: distraction, trying to control circumstances, withdrawing from others, or something else?

Have you experienced a time when doing what was right made your life harder? What helped you remain faithful?

The message described hope in Jesus as an anchor for our souls. What helps you remember His faithfulness when your circumstances or emotions feel unstable?

How can we examine our own contribution to a difficult situation without assuming that every hardship is our fault? What might repentance or making things right look like when we have caused harm?

Have you seen God deepen your faith through a difficult season? What changed, even if the circumstances did not improve?

"You can be hurting and still take the next faithful step." What might that step look like for you: refusing to retaliate, continuing to serve, telling the truth, or another act of obedience?

Who in your group, church, or community is facing a difficult season? How could you offer practical help and companionship this week?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a moment and ask:

Have I assumed that following Jesus should make my life easier?

Am I interpreting hardship as evidence that God has abandoned me?

Where am I seeking relief without bringing my pain to Jesus?

Is there anything I need to confess or take responsibility for?

What might God be teaching me or refining in me through this season?

Am I allowing my present circumstances to overshadow the future Jesus has secured for me?

What is the next faithful step I can take, and who could support me as I take it?

PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Entrust one specific burden to God and take one faithful step in doing good this week.

Name a situation that feels painful, uncertain, or outside your control. Be honest with God about what you fear and what you wish would change. Read John 16:33 again, remembering that Jesus acknowledges the reality of trouble while offering us peace in Him.

Pray: "Lord, You know what I am facing and how I feel. Help me trust Your faithfulness when I cannot see what comes next. Keep my hope anchored in Jesus, and show me the next faithful step I can take."

Choose one concrete response. You might refuse to retaliate, apologize for harm you have caused, keep a commitment, encourage someone else who is hurting, or ask a trusted believer to pray with you. You do not have to wait until you feel strong or have every question answered.

Come back next week ready to share the step you took and what you learned, even if your circumstances have not changed.

Remind yourself each day:
"I can be hurting and still take the next faithful step."

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for entering our suffering, overcoming the world, and securing our future with Him. Ask God to help us entrust ourselves to His care when life feels uncertain or overwhelming. Pray for those facing opposition because of their faith, those grieving or afraid, and those who need courage to take responsibility for their choices. Ask the Holy Spirit to refine our faith, help us continue doing good, and teach us to support one another with patience and practical love. Thank God that He is faithful and that our suffering cannot take away our hope in Christ.