

Real-Life Suffering — Delivery Transcript

Hebrews 12:1–13 (CSB) • Wes Terry • Sunday, June 1, 2025 • Faith IRL

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If you have your Bible, we're going to be in Hebrews chapter 12 this morning. You can turn to Hebrews chapter 12, and as you're turning there, I hesitate to make sweeping generalizations, but every now and then it's unavoidable and exceptions to the rule granted, by and large, I think our culture is allergic to pain and suffering. We do whatever we can to avoid it. We develop technologies, amass wealth, do all kinds of cool tips and tricks to keep our lives free of the kind of pain and suffering that for a vast majority of other people around the world is their daily experience.

Comfort is king, convenience is queen, suffering is a unwelcome intruder, to be kept at bay at all cost. And yet even though that's true and even though we try super, super hard, somehow, inevitably suffering still breaks in and invades our life and disrupts a lot of the good things that we desire or maybe even had going on. Just in our church alone, I don't have to be theoretical or philosophical about it, just in our church alone, there are young mothers who have received diagnoses that have fundamentally changed their futures. There are fathers who have lost jobs such that they're financially not quite sure what they're going to do to be able to provide for their family.

There are young people, teenagers who have had their social world turned upside down and now find themselves crippled with anxiety and fear. And there are our marriages, more than one, who were once very vibrant, very strong, and yet now find themselves holding on just by a thread. And it would be one thing, and quite a lot of people assumed, following Jesus will make my life free of suffering Surely following Jesus will make my life better, as one preacher likes to say, and it will make you better at life. And that's a yes and a no, right?

If you live your life by the instruction manual. Generally when you do things by the instructions, they go better, right? And so you can avoid certain kinds of suffering in your life by following Jesus, living according to his design. And yet at the same time following Jesus does not exempt you from living in a broken world. Living around sinful people. And not

only do you suffer because of those realities, you also sometimes suffer by virtue of following Jesus And that was certainly true of the audience to whom the book of Hebrews was written.

Even Jesus himself in John 16, 33, said, in the world you're going to have trouble. There's no escaping it. One of the things I appreciate about the Bible and about Christianity is it doesn't pretend as though suffering does not exist. It submits that suffering is unavoidable.

Inescapable and universal in a world that is plagued by sin. And it doesn't matter if you follow Jesus or not follow Jesus, it doesn't matter what your beliefs are, it doesn't matter where you live or where you're from. All of us are going to experience suffering at one point or another.

And we live in a culture that tries to avoid the topic altogether. And so in a topic in a culture that avoids that topic, I want us to talk about it, but I don't want us to talk about it as a lot of people often try to talk about the problem of pain and suffering, and that is by answering the question of why. That question I think has been the engine for a lot of atheism in our culture. And it's the valid question. I don't think it's a bad question. There's a whole philosophical You know, discipline called theodicy that is dead devoted to answering the question, why is there suffering?

And it's why a lot of people lose their faith. There's a lot of people just in the last couple of weeks I've talked to some young men who made a decision for Christ when they were really young. They grew up in the church. Kind of borrowed mom and dad's faith, inherited mom and dad's faith, but then when they got into the real world, they graduated, they got into college or, you know, working and dealt with adult problems, you might say. Their childhood faith was not equipped to deal with their adult problems, and so a lot of them just gave up on the faith.

I'm going to do my own thing, I'm going to go my own way, I'm going to try to figure things out through some other mechanisms. And then they end up coming back to church or talking to a pastor like me and they would say something to the effect of what I used to believe as a kid isn't helping me, but what I try to do in response is not helping me either. I've got to figure out something for myself. I got to have an actual faith that can handle my adult problems.

And so what does the Bible have to say about that question? And the Bible does have something to say. It's actually got something to say about both questions. There is a why. There is an answer to the question of why there is pain and suffering, but this is not a series about that. It's a series about real life, right? Real problems and real life for real people. And so I want to answer a much more practical relevant question and instead of answering the question of why suffering, I want to look at the question of how.

How, granted that there is such a thing as pain and suffering. Is there any evidence that there is a God who understands it and will come alongside of us in it? And if that is true, then how should we view our suffering so that we experience that kind of ministry? And that kind of help so that suffering doesn't tear us down, but instead builds us up. And that is what the author of Hebrews is trying to do because he's writing to a group of people who were suffering. They had begun to follow Jesus and as a result of following Jesus their lives were now more difficult.

They were being persecuted, they were being thrown into prison, they had their stuff stolen, they were being mistreated in all sorts of ways. They were alienated from their pleasant society. People who used to love them accept them, even their own family, had ostracized them. And the author of Hebrews, instead of pretending as though it's all it's not that bad and there it'll get better, he doesn't avoid the question. He doesn't pretend like it's not a big deal. He addresses it head on and he does so by pointing to specific people in the Old Testament who also suffered, even though they also followed the Lord And many of them died in a state of suffering, having not received the promise or the reward of their faith, and yet they did so.

And then he gives us the final example of Jesus and his suffering on the cross. And he says, I want you to look at your suffering through this lens. And if you'll approach your suffering in this way, it might not necessarily give you an answer to why you suffer, but if you'll suffer, if you'll take an approach to your suffering, as I'm suggesting, then you will persevere through suffering and it will build you up instead of tearing you down. And so with that in mind, let's pick up our text. Hebrews chapter 12, starting in verse 3.

He talks about the Hall of Fame in verse 11. He talks about Jesus in chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. And then he says to the church, I want you to consider him. In other words, I want you to consider Jesus. I want you to consider his death on the cross because he endured hostility from sinners against himself, and I want you to focus your attention on Jesus so that you will not grow weary and give up. And then he raises the question, in struggling against sin, have you yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood?

And have ye forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? Then he quotes Proverbs chapter 3, verses 10 and 11. My son, do not take the Lord's discipline lightly, or lose heart when you are reprov'd by him, for the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he punishes every son he receives. Instead, endure suffering, but endure suffering as discipline. God is dealing with you as sons, for what son is there that a father does not discipline? So he's saying I want you to focus on Jesus as you suffer. And he's saying to focus on Jesus as opposed to focusing on any other thing.

It's easy when you're suffering to focus on the problems. It's easy to focus on the people causing the problems. But he's saying I want you to focus your attention on Jesus and his

suffering on the cross because your focus in suffering will determine how you see it. It's a frame your focus is what frames your view of suffering. Just like when you're looking at a picture in a picture frame and you're looking at a picture inside that picture frame, what you focus on is going to determine the way you see your picture.

And if you focus on it a different way or focus on something else, then you're going to see a different thing. Yeah, all those kind of ice tricks on Facebook that people are like, do you see an apple or do you see a beautiful woman? And you're like, well, I don't know. Depends on what you focus on, right? And in a similar way, where you put your focus in your suffering will determine how you frame your suffering or how you understand it. Again, we're not answering the question of why we suffer, but we're saying how could I think about my suffering?

How could I apply a narrative to my suffering so that I see what God wants me to see and so that what God wants to accomplish in my suffering can indeed be accomplished. And he says, what I want you to do in focusing on Jesus is to view your suffering as discipline. When you look at the cross, what do you see? You see a man suffering, incredible. Pain, the wrath of God, something he didn't do wrong. What you do not see is God being retributive or vengeful or payback kind of thing.

You do not see God as an enemy, you see him as a father. You do not see Jesus as some wayward rebellious child. You see him as a beloved son. And you do not see his suffering as meaningless and indifferent or purposeless, but rather you see the suffering of Christ on the cross as something that is purposeful. That is producing something redemptive, that is creating a better world in which there is forgiveness and grace. And he's saying, I want you to look at your suffering in that same way. In other words, I want you to view your suffering as discipline.

Now when you hear the word discipline, what comes to your mind? If you're anything like me, you think about getting a spanking, right? Even though I didn't get that many spankings as a kid, ones I got I remembered really well. But you think about going to the principal, you think about getting in trouble. And we do use the word discipline in that way, but this word for disciplines, the Greek word *paideia*. It's where we get our English word *pediatrics*. You know what a pediatrician does? A pediatrician is a doctor that works with children and the job of a pediatrician is to give a young child everything that they need in order to grow up and flourish and mature into an adult.

And that's what this Greek word for discipline means. It means to give everything a child needs in order for them to grow up and flourish into who they're meant to be. And in that way, discipline has a much broader range of meaning than just correcting bad behavior or getting in trouble because you did something wrong. And even the word English word

discipline, we use it in a very broad way. If you think of the word discipline, sometimes it does mean going to the principal, getting in trouble, you did something wrong.

But we also use the word discipline to talk about self-restraint or self-control. If I was to say, wow, you're super disciplined in brushing your teeth, you would what do I mean by that? I mean you're on it. You never miss you never miss a night or a morning or a mid-afternoon coffee. You are disciplined. Or if I said you're very disciplined with your diet, what do I mean? You are super restrained. You practice self-control so that you don't eat bad things and you do eat good things. Or you're disciplined in working out.

All that means is that you apply restraint to yourself, not because you enjoy the restraint, but because you desire something on the other end of that restraint and you're trying to protect yourself from anything that would hinder your getting to that place. And so discipline can be self-control, it can be correcting behavior, it can be protecting behavior, or it can also be what I call perfecting, in that when you go to school or if you go to college, what do you do? You learn a discipline, right? Or when a doctor or dentist opens up a practice, he's practicing his what His discipline.

And what do we mean by discipline when we talk about it in that way? What we mean by discipline is that he has or she has so mastered a domain of knowledge that they don't just know what in theory, but they are able to practice in real life bringing that knowledge to bear. So that it produces something successful or effective. And we wouldn't want a doctor who doesn't understand his discipline because unless he or she understands their discipline, they're not going to produce anything good in our life, they're going to produce something bad.

And so we use the word discipline to talk about perfecting, getting to a point in your mind and in your wisdom where you are able to do what is necessary or inherit the kind of world that is required for you to apply knowledge in that way. And so even the English word discipline has this broad range of meaning. Even the root comes from the Latin word *disare*, which means to discern. And all of these things, whether it's virtue or self-control or wisdom, all of them entail this idea of learning. You're learning virtue.

You're learning self-control and restraint. You're learning wisdom. And wisdom in the Bible is not just knowing what to do, but when to do it, how to do it, where to do it, so that it is successful. Discipline is doing all of these things, and that is what the Bible means by looking at your suffering as discipline from the Lord. It's not just that you're getting in trouble because you did something wrong. In fact, if anything, discipline doesn't mean that from a Christian worldview. Because Jesus took the penalty for our sin.

We're not suffering because we're getting payback for our sins. If anything, God's discipline is to be understood as this teacher or this trainer that is building us and strengthening us so

that we inherit a life of virtue and develop self-control and obtain a degree of wisdom so that we are able to flourish and be prepared for a world in which those things are most relevant. Again, I'm not answering why. If you say, why am I suffering? Well, because God wants to discipline you. Well, that's interesting. What if he isn't?

What if the reason for your suffering is totally divorced from that secondary effect that God has in mind? This isn't about why, this is about how. This is about granted you are suffering, whatever the reasons may be. How should I understand my suffering so that God's purposes are achieved and I don't give up, but I persevere, so those purposes are brought about. So view your suffering as discipline. That's the big idea. All three of those domains, self-control, learning virtue, perfective knowledge, all of those have one thing in common. They all have to do with learning.

And every one of them requires progress every one of them requires resistance and struggle in order for progress to be made. No flourishing adult became a flourishing adult without a little discipline from mom and dad. Amen. In fact kids who don't have a lot of flourishing in their life usually stem from a lack of discipline in their life. It requires discipline and struggle and resistance to develop the degree of knowledge and virtue that is required for flourishing, and the same is true at every step of the way, whether it's virtue or self-control or wisdom, all of it requires resistance and struggle.

It's just like if you're working out, any of the you guys gym rats out here, when you're a gym rat, you'll know that strength is obtained not in the weight room, but in the recovery, right? But what is required in the weight room is for you to not become strong, but to become weak. You have to exert yourself to the maximum degree it's called going to the point of failure. Your muscles just feel like they're about to fall apart. Feel them almost when you're on that final rep you're pushing yourself to a point of absolute weakness it requires resistance and struggle so that in the recovery time the muscles get stronger.

Well the same dynamic is true spiritually. When it comes to becoming a person with a healthy soul, a strong spirit, there is going to be a sense in which there is struggle and resistance that is required, and that as you recover in that recovery time you're becoming stronger and more of the person God is wanting you to be in a spiritual sense. And so don't hate the struggle. Don't despise the pain in the struggle. Don't even assume God is mad at you or punishing you. Just remember in my struggle, God is disciplining me, he is training me, he is teaching me, he is developing me for something better.

That's the right focus. What's the wrong focus? The wrong focus is in verses five and six. He gives two two examples. Don't take the Lord's discipline lightly or lose heart when you are reproved by him. So two things, don't view your suffering with disdain, and don't view your suffering with despair. There's maybe better words to use, but I like to keep the same letters so I can remember them. When you disdain something, what are you doing? You're

trivializing it you're treating as though it's too small. This is nothing. This is it's to look down upon.

That's what the word despise means. Other translations use the word do not despise the Lord's discipline. It means to treat it as though it's nothing. Despair, on the other hand, is the opposite, but equal error. It's to view it too severely. It's to view it as though it's too heavy, not too light, it's too heavy, it's too much, I can't do it's overwhelming, I'm going to give up He's saying if you take either one of those approaches to your suffering, you will miss what God is doing in suffering, which is to discipline you, develop you, make you into a stronger person.

Tim Keller calls these the ancient way and the modern way. And I don't know if that's the best way to understand it, but it is kind of helpful in thinking about how people have managed suffering throughout history. In the time of the New Testament there was a Greek philosophy very popular known as Stoicism. You guys ever heard the word stoic? Before. Someone is very stoic. What do we mean by that? We mean they got a stiff upper lip. They the Stoics, at least in the Greek culture popularize this idea of don't show weakness, don't let yourself be seen as being upset or troubled by the suffering in your life.

We popularize it today with sayings like Suck it up buttercup was one of my favorite things to tell my children. Suck it up buttercup. I probably enjoyed a little too much. This idea of a stip up her lip, grin and barret, chin up. That is, in essence, trivializing suffering, in that you're treating as that you're treating it as though it isn't anything. It's a small thing it's whatever. And today this is popularized in a religion called Buddhism. Buddhism has a lot of views. One of the primary views of Buddhism is that suffering is a reality, it's one of the prime realities of the universe.

And your suffering is a result of your desire and attachment. And so if you want to be happy, you've got to escape suffering. Since your suffering is because of your desire and attachment, to overcome your suffering, you need to Release yourself from those desires. You need to detach yourself from those things that you were attached to and the whole idea of meditation and all, you know you're detaching yourself from the world. You're emptying yourself of desire. Why? So that you can escape suffering. That too is treating suffering as though it isn't anything.

It's nothing I can overcome it. I'm just going to let these things go. These things don't matter. Whereas Islam or even Hinduism take an approach to suffering that leads to despair. There is no relational context of love between a heavenly father and a child that he loves. Allah is sovereign. Allah is doing his thing, and you just got to deal with it. And there is no there is no grace, there is no mercy, there is no sense in which he's going to help you. You just got to do it. You just got to you just got to press through it, which leads to a lot of despair.

Or Hinduism. It's your lot in life. This is your caste. This is what you're stuck with. Maybe next year, in other words, next time you're alive as a whatever you are, it will be better. And then in our modern culture, we've kind of taken a little best of both worlds. In our modern culture, we despise discipline by using technology and wealth and all sorts of things to insulate ourselves from suffering. So we treat it as though it's a small thing. That's why we get a little bit inconvenienced when we see those commercials with the starving children and wherever they are.

And you're just like, tsh, change the channel. Make don't make me feel bad. Or even like little lost puppies. You're like, I don't want to think about lost puppy. Change the channel. Out of sight, out of mind. That's not what I'm about. I'm just going to protect myself and that is in a way trivializing despising suffering but sometimes we have an opposite reaction which is to despair leads to all sorts of self-harm suicidal ideation cutting all sorts of other things. Or codependent forms of counseling where you just find someone that'll listen and you just drain them like bloodletting.

I'm just going to drain you so you can bear all my problems and I can watch you hurt while I hurt. Neither one are appropriate if you want to benefit from your suffering. Both despair and disdain blind you to God's redemptive purpose. So you don't want to trivialize your suffering, but neither do you want to magnify your suffering. You don't want to trivialize it or magnify it. You want to let God sanctify your suffering by viewing it differently, by viewing it as discipline, not discipline because I'm in trouble, but discipline in that God as a heavenly, loving, heavenly Father is using my pain to teach and develop and strengthen me so that I'm prepared for a different kind of world.

So if that's the wrong way to view it, what's the right way to do it? The right way to view it? Look at verse 7 again. Endure suffering as discipline. God's dealing with you as sons. Then he uses this analogy. What son is there that a father doesn't discipline? If you're without discipline, which everybody receives, then you're illegitimate children and not sons or daughters. Furthermore, we had human fathers discipline us and we respected them. Shouldn't we submit even more to the father of spirits and live? This is one of the things you need to know.

About the author of Hebrews, he loves these lesser to greater arguments. It's called a qal wahomer. Qal wahomer means from light to heavy. He's saying if this is true in our earthly dads, how much more so is this true of our heavenly father? And he uses this basic logic that earthly dads only discipline children who belong to them. It would be really weird, right, if I grabbed a kid who was not my kid, someone else's kid in our church, and I just grabbed him up and I said, how dare you!

But it'd be traumatizing, right? And I'd probably be in jail. Although my dad used to say to my cousins, I will whip you like you're my own. And I always thought, wow, can you say

that? I mean I didn't know you could say that he never did do it, so don't call CBS, but he would threaten it. It was weird, right? You're not you can't do that. You're not you're not their dad. But my kids, I apply a similar, if not greater, form of pain and discomfort. And what does it produce?

It doesn't traumatize them, it doesn't destroy them. In a way it enriches our relationship. Dad cares enough about me to care how I live. And he said, this is harming me, this is going to lead down a bad path, and he doesn't want me to go down that path. And so I respect him. That's what he says. We had human fathers discipline us, and what did we do? We respected them. So if that dynamic is true of earthly dads, how much more so is it true of our heavenly father? Then he makes this comparison between earthly dads and our heavenly dad.

Verse 10, they, earthly dads, disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he, our heavenly dad, does it for our benefit so that we can share in his holiness. Right here he's drawing out two weaknesses or inferiorities that earthly dads have compared to our heavenly dad. Namely, when they disciplined us, it was what seemed good to them. Now, in a way, every earthly dad is only ever a dad, right? He's a sinful man, a sinful woman, if you're a mom. But even if you're not, even if you're at your very best, you're the most virtuous dad or the most virtuous mother, even then you're limited by your perspective.

You have limited wisdom, you have limited perspective, and you have selfish motivations, whether you admit it or not. It may be that your discipline is because you just want some peace and quiet, or maybe your discipline is to make them a wonderful person. And maybe sometimes you can't tell the difference. Because they could become a wonderful person if they would just leave me alone. They would just be quiet. It's what seems good to you. And the other thing is it's for a short time. What he means by that is the implications of your discipline is in the here and the now.

Yeah, they may stop talking for a couple of hours, but it's not going to ultimately change who they are it may give you some peace and quiet, but the implications of a lot of our discipline in this world is very temporary. Whereas our Heavenly Father has perfect wisdom. He has perfect knowledge. His motivations are pure. He disciplines us for our benefit. In other words, it's not selfishly motivated. It's not so he can have peace and quiet. God does not need peace and quiet. He is peace and quiet. Anything he allows, anything he does is for our good, and he does it so that we can share in his holiness.

In other words, it's not temporary implications. There are eternal implications to the discipline that God brings into our life. And when we read this word holiness, a lot of us, what do you think? You immediately think something virtuous, good behavior, be holy, God is holy, God is good, I need to be good. But that's not what the word holiness that's not the only thing the word holiness means. The technical definition for holiness just means to be

set apart. It means to be wholly other. It needs to be different than anyone and everyone else.

So God is holy in that He is more virtuous and whole more. Yeah, virtuous than anything else in this world, but he's also eternal. He's also omniscient. He's also omnipotent. He's he's unlike anything and everything in this world. He is eternal. He is he is beyond. And he's saying God is disciplining you so that you can share in that. You can share in his holiness. You can become holy other. You can become set apart. You can experience his eternality and his otherness. In a way that you couldn't experience divorced from the suffering.

And then he really drills it home in verse 11 He says, no discipline seems enjoyable at the time but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. To those who have been trained by it. Again, you read the word righteousness, what do you think? A lot of us we think good behavior. I need to be righteous. I need to live a good life. But that's not what the word righteousness means in the original context. The word righteousness means to be rightly related. Now you can be rightly related to virtue You can also be rightly related to what's wise.

You can be rightly related to your world. You can be rightly related to people. In other words, you can be righteous in a very broad sense, all it means is everything in the world is right towards you, and you are right in everything towards the world. With everything in the world. It reminds me of what you know you guys know Matthew McConaughey. Some of you love him, some of you hate him, but he's famous for this line. All right, all right, all right. Does anybody remember what movie that's in? Dazed and Confused.

In the movie Dazed and Confused, when Matthew McConaughey says alright, all right, all right, and it's like earbudter for all the ladies. What's he saying? He's saying it's all good, baby. It's all good. Everything is awesome. Everything is great. And that's why God says, I'm going to work in your suffering so that one day there's going to be a crop produced in your life, and that crop is peace. And righteousness, so that you are rightly related to everything in this world, and that everything in this world is going to be rightly related to you.

So do you see it's so much bigger than m moral virtue? This is glory, this is paradise, this is the Garden of Eden, this is God working in your suffering so that You are being prepared for a world in which there is no suffering. And in that way, suffering is a process of development. Suffering is training you. God is working in suffering to prepare us for a world without it. But it only comes to those who are trained by it. Again, that word trained, it's where we get the English word gymnasium.

You know one of the things I discovered this week, the Greek word for trained also means naked. You know what I immediately thought of? Y M C A, men's locker room, baby. Oh, traumatizing. In Greek culture, people did go to the gymnasium. And they would exercise in

the Raw. They were nude. And the reason they would do that is because back then you had tunics, cloaks. If you're going to run a relay, you don't need your cloak you know floating around behind you. You need no restrictions, no no impediments to movement.

And so people would run in the in the nude. And it was also a way to show off the results of discipline training because the human body in its pristine condition was very Cherished in Greek culture. I'm getting sidetracked, that's not why I'm saying all this. The point of training has nothing to do with being naked, but the purpose of being naked is so that you can have freedom. And it's the opposite of what most people think when they think discipline. They think discipline, you're not letting me be free. You're not letting me be who I really want to be, Dad.

You're not letting me do what I really want to do. But freedom is not satisfying your passions. Freedom is not getting to do whatever you want to do. Real freedom is being able to live as you really should. Think about a musician. A musician disciplines himself to learn his instrument. And it is hard, it is grueling, it is frustrating, and they stick with it, they try and they try and they try. And what is happening as they impose discipline on themselves, they are getting greater freedom, not less. They are more free to express themselves through their instrument, and the greater the discipline, the greater the freedom, and that is how discipline works in the Christian life.

Through the training, you are becoming more free. Through the training, God is disciplining you. And through your suffering, God is creating a type of person who can inherit a type of world in which there is no suffering, all things that are sad are untrue, all the things that are unglorious become glorious, and God cannot give you that world until he works in your suffering to prepare you for that day. And that's why we suffer. And in some ways suffering is just the shadow side of love. You can't have love without suffering, and you cannot have a perfect world of eternal love without learning and being developed for that world through the suffering of this world.

And you see all of those things at the cross of Jesus Christ. And so he's preparing us. So don't view it as something to disdain, don't view it as something to despair, but view it as something in which God is sanctifying you, developing you, strengthening you for what's to come. It is a means of freedom, not just punishment or retribution. So what do we do? He says there's two things I want you to do. To inherit. This kind of world, there's two things you need to do, and it's all plural.

These are second-person plural imperatives, which means they don't just apply to you as a person, it applies to us as a church. Number one, strengthen your tired hands and your weakened knees. Number two, make straight paths for your feet. Why? So that what is lame may not be dislocated but healed instead. It's important to remember these are corporate applications because it's tempting to read that and individualize it. Well, I need to get my

self-help book and I need to strengthen myself and build myself up and You know, granted more power to you, go for it.

But that's not what this is talking about. He's saying in your local church, brothers and sisters in Christ, you guys need to strengthen each other. This is why small groups are so important. This is why we're always beating the drum. You need to be in a small group. Why? So that you can get connected relationally. You say I can get connected relationally without a small group. Then go for it. Do it. Just get connected relationally. Because there will be a day in which you do not feel very strong. Just like a person maxing out on the bench press, you are going to go to the point of failure and in that day you need someone behind you who can come up and lift that bar so that you're not destroyed by that pain and suffering but you're instead strengthened by it.

You're in a little domain, you're in a sphere of recovery where you can be honest and open and encouraged and develops in those times of God's discipline in your life, in those times of suffering. So you got to strengthen what's weak and then straighten what's crooked. What he means by that is straight paths. It's actually right there in so in Proverbs 3. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lay not on your own understanding in all your ways, acknowledge him and he'll make a straight path. There can be a sense in which when we are living in a world of brokenness, that we can get debris and hurdles and obstacles in our way.

And what is needed in a church family is for our brothers and sisters to come alongside of us and say You may not be able to see it, but there's a big fat rock in your path here and it needs to go. That's why I think that's why our biblical counseling ministry is so important. Because sometimes we can't see the obstacles that are in our own lives. And we need somebody, not even smarter than us, just someone that's not us, to say this is this is actually Hindering you. This is undermining you.

This has to go. And so when you strengthen what's weak and you straighten what is crooked, then you'll be able to run your race much more effectively than you would have otherwise. The third thing he says is you got to focus on the healing so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but be healed instead. There is a sense in which we need brothers and sisters in Christ because when we suffer, what's so tempting is to focus on the suffering. They were so wrong. They did this. They was so unjust.

And yes, it's true. Yes, they were. I'm sorry it happened. But you cannot stay there. You cannot only focus on the brokenness. You cannot only focus on what's wrong. You need to focus on the healing. You need to focus on what God is doing. You need to focus on how God is building you and strengthening you. Look to the future. Look with hope to the future, not just with despair in the present or the past, and you need people to come alongside of you so that you don't stick there and you instead go there.

And the only way any of those things happen is if you do the last thing, which is to fix your eyes on Jesus. That's what he said in verse 3. Consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, and then right before that run the race with endurance, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. This is why you need brothers and sisters. This is why you need to go to church. This is why you need to stop skipping church. Remember that's what he that's what the author of Hebrews said to the audience.

He says, stop forsaking the assembly. Go visit the prisoners. Remember the mistreated. Be a good church person. Because you need each other. They need you and you need them to be strong and to run straight. And together fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Because when you look to the cross and you fix your eyes on the cross, you will be reminded your suffering has a purpose. God is working in your suffering. He's producing something through that suffering. He's preparing you for a world in which that suffering will not exist, but you're only going to get to that world if you keep persevering and do not give up.

You've got to keep believing. And you're only going to keep believing if you strengthen the weak and straighten what's crooked and focus on the healing by fixing your eyes on Jesus. There's a story in the Old Testament with this undone where Moses was told by God to hold a bronze serpent up. And that everybody who got bit by snakes, if they would look to that bronze serpent, they would no longer be sick, but they would be healed instead. And Jesus talking with Nicodemus, Nick at Nite, said, I am that serpent.

In the same way the Son of man has to be lifted up. And what he meant by that is, I'm going to suffer, I'm going to die on the cross, I'm going to be lifted up as an object of scorn and shame. But as I am lifted up, anyone who looks to me will not perish, but they'll be healed instead. John 3. 16 comes right after that. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever would look to him, whoever would believe in him, they wouldn't perish, but they would have everlasting life.

The only way you can suffer Christianly is to put your suffering in the context of a relationship with the Heavenly Father who loves you. And relates towards you as his beloved son. And the only way that's possible, biblically, is through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We become united to him, he becomes united to us. Our suffering becomes his suffering, but our his glory becomes our glory. And so if you do not have that kind of relationship with Jesus this morning, you will not be able to suffer. You will not be able to view your suffering in this way.

And if you are a Christian this morning, to the degree that you're fixing your eyes on Jesus is the degree to which you're going to be able to persevere through suffering. And see what God is doing in and through it. And so I want to encourage us in this time of response to do that. To twofold. To one personally, individually, to Ask God renew in me a vision of Christ, renew in me my love for Jesus. But also to consider how God might be using you or want to use you

to strengthen other brothers and sisters in Christ to come alongside of them and help them in running their race so that we don't give up but that we persevere as God accomplishes his greater work of redemption in and through our broken world.

And so you do that now as the Lord leads. The altar's open if you want to pray. I'll be happy to pray with anybody if they want. If you have a public decision you want to make, you can do that by the QR code that's on the screen. You can also scan the, or you can also fill out the connect card. Or you can just come down and talk to me. It's whatever you want to do, but don't leave this room without responding to the Lord in his word. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time and we thank you that Holy Spirit you were present in this place and that at the end of the day preaching is not about listening to another human, it's about listening to the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.

And so where there was too much of me, help us to forget that. And where there was a lot of you, help us to listen, to have ears to hear. What the Holy Spirit is trying to say. And I do pray that you would make us a church that is a body. That is strong and that we can run a race that endures that finishes what you started without giving up. And that you would use us, each one, to play their important role of joining you, cooperating with you as you do that work.

I pray for the men and the women and the children, the students who are suffering right now, who feel as though the only thing they can, the only thing that ever occupies their mind is their suffering. And then I pray that this morning you would open up their eyes to zoom out beyond the pain and the people who caused it to zoom out into the purposes of their loving Heavenly Father, who is working, training, teaching, showing. Developing them for a world in which that suffering will one day be no more and every tear will be wiped.

And all things will come new. And so help them to see that now as we respond in Jesus' name. Amen.